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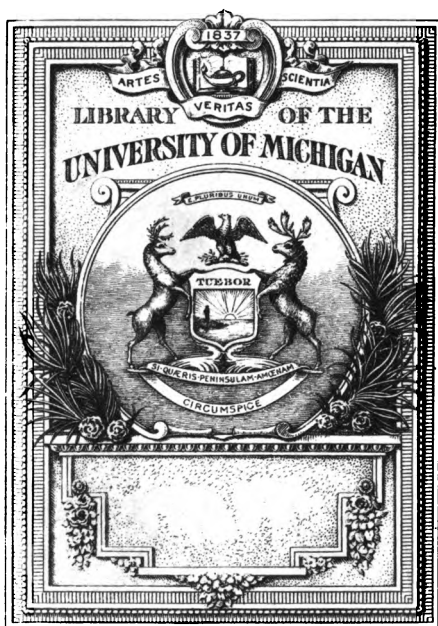
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ALS

Mary H Ford.





Henry Thoreau

27,932

"Bismarck"
THE MASTER-BUILDER
A DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

BY

HENRIK IBSEN

TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN

BY

JNO. W. ARCTANDER.

MINNEAPOLIS:
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CHARACTERS:

HALVARD SOLNESS, a master-builder.

MRS. ALINE SOLNESS, his wife.

DOCTOR HERDAL, their family physician.

KNUTE BROVIK, formerly architect, now assistant to
Solness.

RAGNAR BROVIK, his son, a draftsman.

KAJA FOSLIE, his niece, bookkeeper.

HILDA WANGEL.

SOME LADIES.

PEOPLE in the street.

394515

ACT I.

(A plainly furnished office in the house of Solness. Folding doors to the left lead out to the hall. To the right a door to the private rooms of the house. In the background an open door to the drafting room. At front of stage, to the left, a high desk with books, papers and writing materials. Beyond the door a stove. In the corner to the right a sofa and a couple of chairs. In front of the sofa a table. On the table a water pitcher and glass. At front of stage, to the right, a smaller table. Near it a rocker and an easy-chair. Lighted work-lamps on the table in the drafting room, on the table in the corner and on the desk.)

(In the drafting room KNUTE BROVIK and his son Ragnar are seated busy with constructions and calculations. At the desk in the office stands KAJA FOSLIE writing in the ledger. KNUTE BROVIK is an old sparely built man with white hair and beard. He is dressed in a somewhat shiny, black coat. He wears spectacles and has a white, somewhat yellowed cravat. RAGNAR BROVIK is a man about 30 years old, well dressed, has light hair and is a little stooping. KAJA FOSLIE is a slenderly built young girl, a little over 20, neatly dressed, but has a sickly appearance. She uses a green shade for the eyes. All three work along for some time in silence.)

KNUTE BROVIK.

(Arising suddenly, as in anguish, from the drafting table; breathes heavily and with difficulty in going through the door)

No, I can endure this no longer.

KAJA.

(Going towards him)

You are ill to night, uncle?

BROVIK.

Oh, it seems to me I grow worse and worse every day.

RAGNAR.

(Who has arisen and comes nearer)

You ought to go home, father, and try to get a little rest.

BROVIK.

(Impetuously)

Go to bed perhaps? Do you want me to suffocate?

KAJA.

But take a walk anyway.

RAGNAR.

Yes, do. I will go with you.

BROVIK.

(Violently)

I will not go before he comes. To night I will have it out with — (with suppressed wrath) with him — the boss.

KAJA

(Anxiously)

No, uncle, please postpone *that*.

RAGNAR.

Yes; it is better to wait, father!

BROVIK.

(Breathing with difficulty)

Ha, ha! I think I have not a very long time to wait.

KAJA.

(Listening)

Hush! I hear him on the stairs.

(All three go back to their work. A short pause.)

(The master builder, HALVARD SOLNESS, enters through the door from the hall. He is a man somewhat aged, but healthy and strong with short curly hair, dark mustache and dark, heavy eye-brows. He wears a drab, tightly buttoned coat with upright collar and wide lapels. Has on his head a soft, gray felt hat and under his arm a couple of portfolios.)

SOLNESS.

(In entering, points toward the drafting room and asks in a whisper)

Have they gone?

KAJA.

(Shaking her head)

No!

(She takes the shade off.)

(Solness walks across the stage, throws his hat on a chair, places the portfolios on the table in front of the sofa and approaches the desk.)

(Kaja writes incessantly, but appears nervous.)

SOLNESS.

(In a natural voice)

What are you entering now, Miss Foslie?

KAJA.

(With a shudder)

Oh, it is only—

SOLNESS.

Let me see, Miss Foslie. (Bends over her, pretends to look in the ledger and whispers) Kaja!

KAJA.

(Writing. In a whisper)

Yes?

SOLNESS.

Why do you always take the shade off, when I come in?

KAJA.

(As before)

Because wearing it makes me look so homely.

SOLNESS.

(Smiling)

Wouldn't you like that, Kaja?

KAJA.

(Looks half up toward him)

Not for anything in the world. Not in *your* eyes.

SOLNESS.

(Patting her lightly on the head)

Poor, poor little Kaja!

KAJA.

(Lowering her head)

Hush, hush! They may hear you.

(Solness sauntering across the floor towards the right, turns suddenly and stops at the door to the drafting room)

SOLNESS.

Has anyone inquired for me?

RAGNAR.

(Rising)

Yes, the people who want the cottage built at Leafbeach.

SOLNESS.

(Growling)

Bah! They will have to wait. I have not made up my mind yet about the plans.

RAGNAR.

(Nearer, somewhat hesitating)

They were so anxious to get the drawings soon.

SOLNESS.

(As before)

Yes, of course! They all are.

BROVIK.

(Looking up)

For they are so very, very anxious to have a chance to move into their own house, they say.

SOLNESS.

Yes, yes. We know all about that. And then they take it just as it comes. Procure for themselves a dwelling, a kind of place of resort only, but no home. No, thanks! Let them then rather call on some one else. Tell them so, when they come again.

BROVIK.

(Pushes his spectacles up on his forehead and looks surprised at him)

To some one else? Would you give up that job?

SOLNESS.

(Impetuously)

Yes, yes, yes! Damn it all! If it is bound to be so! — Rather that than to build at random, for I don't know those people very much yet, don't you see?

BROVIK.

Oh, they are sound enough. Ragnar knows them. He visits at their house. They are real solid.

SOLNESS.

Bah! solid! — That is not what I mean at all. The devil, don't *you* understand me either, now. (Impetuously) I don't want to have anything to do with those strange people. Let them go to whom they please for all of me.

BROVIK.

(Rising)

Do you really mean that?

SOLNESS.

(Sulkily)

Yes, I do for *once*. (He steps forward)

(Brovik exchanges a glance with Ragnar, who makes a motion of caution. He thereupon steps into the office.)

BROVIK.

May I speak with you a moment?

SOLNESS:

Certainly!

BROVIK.

(To Kaja)

Step into the other room, please, for a moment.

KAJA.

(Anxiously)

But, uncle—

BROVIK.

Do as I tell you, my child, and close the door.

(Kaja goes hesitatingly into the drafting room, looks anxiously and entreatingly at Solness and closes the door.)

BROVIK.

(In a somewhat muffled voice)

I don't want the poor children to know how miserable I am.

SOLNESS.

Yes, you look very badly nowadays.

BROVIK.

All is soon over with me. I get weaker and weaker every day.

SOLNESS.

Won't you sit down.

BROVIK.

Thanks! may I?

SOLNESS.

(Placing the easy chair before him)

Here please! — Well, what is it?

BROVIK.

(Who seats himself with some difficulty)

Well, it is about Ragnar. *That* is what weighs most heavily upon me. What will become of him?

SOLNESS.

Your son! He will of course remain with me as long as he wishes to.

BROVIK.

But that is just what he does not wish. He thinks he cannot—do so any longer.

SOLNESS.

Well, I should think that he has a pretty good salary, but if he should demand more, I would not be unwilling to—

BROVIK.

No, No! That is not the point. (*Impetuously*) But he too must some time have an opportunity to work on his own hook.

SOLNESS.

(*Without looking at him*)

Do you believe that Ragnar has the necessary ability to do that?

BROVIK.

No, that is what is most terrible. This, that I have commenced to doubt the boy, for you have never spoken as much as—as one encouraging word concerning him. But then it seems to me that anything else is impossible anyway. He *must* have ability.

SOLNESS.

But he has not learned anything; nothing thoroughly; except drafting, of course.

BROVIK.

(*Looks at him with suppressed hatred and says hoarsely*)

You did not either have very much knowledge of the trade the time you worked for me; but you started out anyway, you did. (*Breathes heavily*) And got on top. And got to the windward both of me and so many others.

SOLNESS.

Well, you see, luck came my way.

BROVIK.

You are right. Luck always came your way; but then I should not think you could have the heart to let me die without having a chance to see

what Ragnar is able to do, and besides, I would so much like to see them married too—before I depart.

SOLNESS.

(Sharply)

Is she the one who wants that?

BROVIK.

Not so much Kaja; but Ragnar talks about it every day. (Entreatingly) You must—you must help him to some independent work now. I must see something that the boy has done. Do you hear?

SOLNESS.

(Angrily)

The devil!—I cannot get orders for him from the moon.

BROVIK.

He can get a nice order just now. A great piece of work.

SOLNESS.

(Uneasy and startled)

Can *he*?

BROVIK.

If *you* will give your consent.

SOLNESS.

What kind of work is that?

BROVIK.

(Somewhat hesitating)

He can get the order for the new cottage on Leafbeach.

SOLNESS.

Ah! That one! But that I should build myself.

BROVIK.

But you don't care to do it.

SOLNESS.

(Angrily)

Don't care? I? who dares say that?

BROVIK.

You said so yourself a little while ago.

SOLNESS.

Oh! Don't pay any attention to what I *say*. Can Ragnar get the order for the building of that cottage?

BROVIK.

Yes. He is acquainted with the family, you see, and then he has, only for his own amusement of course, drawn some plans and made the calculations and all that—

SOLNESS.

And are the people satisfied with his plans?

BROVIK.

Yes; if *you* only would look them over and approve them, then—

SOLNESS.

Then they will let Ragnar build their home?

BROVIK.

They like very much what he suggested. They thought, that the idea was something so entirely *new*, they said.

SOLNESS.

Hah, hah! New! No such antiquated trash as I usually build.

BROVIK.

They thought it was something *different*.

SOLNESS.

(With suppressed anger)

Then it was to see Ragnar, that they came—while I was out.

BROVIK.

They came to call on you and then to ask, if you would be willing to withdraw.

SOLNESS.

(Impetuously)

Withdraw? I?

BROVIK.

If you found that Ragnar's plans—

SOLNESS.

I withdraw in favor of your son?

BROVIK.

Give up the contract, they mean.

SOLNESS.

Bah! that is one and the same thing. (With a bitter laugh) Ha, ha! Halvard Solness shall commence to withdraw now. Make room for those who are younger; for the very youngest perhaps. Only make room—room—room!

BROVIK.

Good Lord! There ought to be room for more than one here.

SOLNESS.

Well, there is not so much room here either; but be that as it may, I will never withdraw. I will never take a back seat for anyone. Never voluntarily. Never, never will I do *that*.

BROVIK.

(Rising with difficulty)

Must I then depart from this life without hope,

without joy, without confidence and trust in Ragnar? Without having seen a single work which he has done? Shall I?

SOLNESS.

(Turns half away and mumbles)

Hm! Don't ask any more questions now.

BROVIK.

Yes! Answer me that. Shall I depart from this life so miserably poor?

SOLNESS.

(Appearing undecided. Finally he says in a low, but firm voice)

You will have to depart from this life as you best know and can.

BROVIK.

So be it.

(Walking up the floor)

SOLNESS.

(Following him as if in despair)

Yes, for I can't do anything else, you understand. *I am as I am.* I am as my Creator made me. I am no creator myself.

BROVIK.

No, no! I suppose not. (Tottering away, stops at the table in front of the sofa) May I take a glass of water?

SOLNESS.

Certainly.

(Pours him out a glass and hands it to him.)

BROVIK.

Thanks! (Drinks and puts the glass down. Solness walks over to the door of the drafting room and opens it)

SOLNESS.

Ragnar, you had better see your father home.

(Ragnar rises quickly. He and Kaja enter the office)

RAGNAR.

What is the matter, father?

BROVIK.

Take my arm. We will go.

RAGNAR.

Very well! Put on your things, Kaja.

SOLNESS.

Miss Foslie must remain. Only for a few moments. I have a letter to dictate.

BROVIK.

(Looking at Solness)

Good night! Sleep well,—if you can.

SOLNESS.

Good night!

(Brovik and Ragnar leave through the door to the hall. Kaja walks over to the desk. Solness remains standing at the easy chair with bent head.)

KAJA.

(Uncertain)

Did you *have* a letter—?

SOLNESS.

(Quickly)

No, of course not. (Looks sharply at her) Kaja!

KAJA.

(Timid and in a low voice)

Well?

SOLNESS.

(Pointing in a commanding way with his finger towards the floor)

Come over here! Right away!

KAJA.

(Hesitating)

Yes.

SOLNESS.

(As before)

Nearer still!

KAJA.

What do you want of me?

SOLNESS.

(Looks for a while at her)

Is it *you* I can thank for this?

KAJA.

No, no! Don't think that.

SOLNESS.

But to marry—that is what you now desire.

KAJA.

(In a low voice)

Ragnar and I have been engaged for 4-5 years and then—

SOLNESS.

And then you think there ought to be an end to it. Is it not so?

KAJA.

Ragnar and uncle say that I *must*. I will have to give in.

SOLNESS.

(Milder)

Kaja, don't you really love Ragnar just a little too?

KAJA.

I loved Ragnar very much once.—Before I came here to you.

SOLNESS.

But not now any more? Not at all?

KAJA.

(Passionately, with her hands folded and held up towards him)

Ah, you know so well, that now I love only one. No one else in the whole world. I never will be able to love anyone else.

SOLNESS.

Yes, yes! you say that and still you go away from me. Leave me here alone with it all.

KAJA.

But could I not not be allowed to remain with you, even if Ragnar—

SOLNESS.

No, no! That cannot be done at all. If Ragnar leaves and commences work on his own hook, he will have use for you himself.

KAJA.

(Wringing her hands)

Oh, this must not be. I cannot be parted from you. It really seems to me impossible.

SOLNESS.

Then see to it, that you get these foolish notions out of Ragnar's head. Marry him as much as you please—(Changing the tone of his voice) Well, well, I mean of course—get him to remain in the position he has here with me, for then I can be allowed to keep you also, my dear Kaja.

KAJA.

Yes. How lovely it would be, if that might be arranged.

SOLNESS.

(Placing her head in his hands and whispering)

For I *can* not be without you, you understand. I must have you here by my side every day.

KAJA.

(In nervous exaltation)

My God! My God!

SOLNESS.

(Pressing a kiss on her hair)

Kaja, Kaja!

KAJA.

(Kneeling before him)

Oh, how kind you are toward me. How unutterably kind you are.

SOLNESS.

(Impetuously)

Stand up! For God's sake, stand up! I think I hear someone! (He lifts her up. She totters over towards the desk)

(Mrs. SOLNESS enters through the door to the right. She is lean and looks as if she had had great trouble, but exhibits traces of former beauty. Blond side curls. Elegantly dressed in black. Speaks somewhat slowly and in a plaintive voice.)

MRS. SOLNESS.

(In the door)

Halvard!

SOLNESS.

(Turns around)

Ah, are you there, my dear?

MRS. SOLNESS.

(With a glance at Kaja)

I am afraid I am interfering here.

SOLNESS.

Not at all. Miss Foslie has only a short letter to write.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, I see.

SOLNESS.

What was it you wanted, Aline?

MRS. SOLNESS.

I only came to tell you that Dr. Herdal, is in.

the sitting room. Perhaps you would come in there too, Halvard?

SOLNESS.

(Glances suspiciously at her)

Um,—must the doctor necessarily see me, my dear?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Not necessarily. He just came to make me a call and would like to pay you his respects at the same time.

SOLNESS.

(With a low chuckle)

Yes, I supposed that much. Well, you will have to ask him to wait a little.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Then you will come in later?

SOLNESS.

Perhaps so. Later—later, my dear. After a little while.

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Again glancing at Kaja)

But do not forget it now, Halvard!

(Withdraws and closes the door)

KAJA.

My God! My God!—I am sure Mrs. Solness suspects something.

SOLNESS.

No, not at all. At least not more than usual. But it is better for you to go now anyway, Kaja.

KAJA.

Yes, yes, I *must* go now.

SOLNESS.

(Sharply)

And then you will arrange that other matter for me. Do you hear?

KAJA.

Oh, if it only depended on *me*—

SOLNESS.

I will have it arranged, I say, and that within a day.

KAJA.

(With anxiety)

If it cannot be accomplished in any other way, I can break my engagement.

SOLNESS.

(Inscrutable)

Break your engagement! Are you crazy? Will you break your engagement?

KAJA.

(Desperately)

Yes. Better so. For I must—I must be allowed to remain near you. I cannot go away from you. It is absolutely impossible.

SOLNESS.

(Flying into a passion)

But, the devil!—Ragnar! When it is just Ragnar, I—

KAJA.

(Looks at him with terror in her glance)

It is mostly for Ragnar's sake you—you—?

SOLNESS.

(More composed)

Oh, no, of course not. You do not seem to comprehend anything either. (Mildly and low) It is of

course *you* I must have before everything, you, Kaja. But precisely on that account you must prevail on Ragnar to remain in his position here. So go now.

KAJA.

Very well. Good night.

SOLNESS.

Good night. (As she is about to leave) Look here! Are Ragnar's plans in that room?

KAJA.

Yes. I did not see him take them along.

SOLNESS.

Then go in and find them for me. I might perhaps examine them a little anyhow.

KAJA.

(With joy)

Yes, please do that.

SOLNESS.

For your sake I will, my dear Kaja. Well, let me have them quick then.

(Kaja runs into the drafting room, rummages nervously in a drawer in the table, finds a portfolio and brings it to him.)

KAJA.

Here are all the plans.

SOLNESS.

Very well. Place them on that table over there.

KAJA.

(Laying the portfolio down)

Good night once more. (Pleadingly) And think kindly of me.

SOLNESS.

You know I always do that. Good night, my little Kaja. (With a glance to the door to the right) — Now go, please.

(MRS. SOLNESS and DR. HERDAL enter through the door to the right. He is a rather elderly, fleshy gentleman, with a round, full, clean shaven face; has thin, blond hair; wears gold rimmed spectacles.)

MRS. SOLNESS.

(In the door)

Halvard, I cannot prevail upon the doctor to wait any longer.

SOLNESS.

Well, come in Doctor.

MRS. SOLNESS.

(To Kaja, who is turning down the lamp on the desk)

Already through with that letter, Miss Foslie?

KAJA.

(Embarrassed)

That letter—?

SOLNESS.

Yes, it was a very short letter.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, it must have been very short.

SOLNESS.

You may go, Miss Foslie. Only be here early in the morning.

KAJA.

Yes Sir. Good night, Mrs Solness.

(She leaves through the door to the hall.)

MRS. SOLNESS.

It must be nice for you, Halvard, that you managed so as to get hold of this young lady.

SOLNESS.

Yes, you are right. She is useful for a good many things.

MRS. SOLNESS.

It seems so.

DR. HERDAL.

Is she a smart book-keeper also?

SOLNESS.

Well—of course she has had considerable practice during the last two years, and then she is so very kind and so willing to do whatever is required of her.

MRS. SOLNESS.

That must be very pleasant.

SOLNESS.

It is. Especially to one who has not been spoiled in that line.

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Mildly reproachful)

Can you say *that*, Halvard?

SOLNESS.

No, no, my dear Aline. I beg your pardon.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Oh, not at all. Well, doctor it is understood then, that you will return later and take tea with us?

DR. HERDAL.

I will return as soon as I have made that sick-call.

MRS. SOLNESS.

We shall be so glad.

(Leaves through the door to the right.)

SOLNESS.

Are you in a hurry, doctor?

DR. HERDAL.

No, not at all.

SOLNESS.

May I have a little chat with you?

DR. HERDAL.

Most assuredly.

SOLNESS.

Well, then let us be seated.

(He motions the doctor to a seat in the rocker, while he takes the easy chair.)

SOLNESS.

(Looks searchingly at him)

Tell me,—did you notice anything about Alive?

DR. HERDAL.

Now, while she was in here, you mean?

SOLNESS.

Yes.—Towards me. Did you notice anything?

DR. HERDAL

(Smiles)

Yes, by God, I could not very well help noticing that your wife—hm—

SOLNESS.

Well?

DR. HERDAL.

—that your wife is not overly fond of this Miss Foslie.

SOLNESS.

Nothing else? I have noticed that myself.

DR. HERDAL.

And it is not so very strange.

SOLNESS.

What?

DR. HERDAL.

That she is not particularly in love with the idea, that you have another lady near you the whole day.

SOLNESS.

No, you may be right in that.—And Aline too. But that—well that cannot be otherwise.

DR. HERDAL.

Could you not get a young man for book-keeper?

SOLNESS.

First come, first served? No, many thanks! That will never do.

DR. HERDAL.

But when your wife—as poorly as she is,—when she cannot bear to see this going on?

SOLNESS.

Well, that does not matter—I came near saying. I must retain Kaja Foslie. I cannot use any other person but just her.

DR. HERDAL.

No other person?

SOLNESS.

No other person.

DR. HERDAL.

(Draws his chair nearer to Solness.)

Now look here, my dear Mr. Solness. May I put a question to you in all confidence?

SOLNESS.

As you please.

DR. HERDAL.

Women have, you see, in certain matters a confounded sharp scent.

SOLNESS.

So they have. There is no question about that. But—?

DR. HERDAL.

Well, listen to me. When your wife not in any way can bear this Kaja Foslie—

SOLNESS.

Well, what then?

DR. HERDAL.

—has she then not a good,—well, we will say, just a little bit of a cause for this involuntary repugnance?

SOLNESS.

(Looks at him and rises from the chair)

Ah, ha!

DR. HERDAL.

Do not feel offended at me. But has she not?

SOLNESS.

(Sharply)

No!

DR. HERDAL.

No cause at all?

SOLNESS.

No other cause than her own suspiciousness.

DR. HERDAL.

I know you have known several women in your time.

SOLNESS.

Yes, so I have.

DR. HERDAL.

And liked some of them pretty well too?

SOLNESS.

Oh yes, that too.

DR. HERDAL.

But in this affair with Miss Foslie—? Here there is nothing of that kind in the wind?

SOLNESS.

No! Nothing at all on *my* part.

DR. HERDAL.

But on her part then?

SOLNESS.

It seems to me, doctor, you have no right to put that question.

DR. HERDAL.

It was your wife's finely developed faculty of scent we were talking about.

SOLNESS.

True. And so far— (Lowers his voice) Aline's faculty of scent, as you call it, has had to stand a most severe test.

DR. HERDAL.

Aha!—I see.—

SOLNESS.

(Seating himself again)

Doctor Herdal!—I will tell you a very strange story. That is, if you desire to listen to it?

DR. HERDAL.

I like very much to listen to strange stories.

SOLNESS.

Very well. You undoubtedly remember that I offered Knute Brovik and his son employment, at the time things went wrong with the old man.

DR. HERDAL.

Yes. I know something about that.

SOLNESS.

For they are really pretty smart fellows, both of them, you see. They are talented, each in his own way. But then the young man took into his head to become engaged to be married. And after a while of course he wanted to get married—and to commence business on his own hook. For all young people, of course, have ideas of that sort.

DR. HERDAL.

(Laughing)

Yes, they have that confoundedly bad habit, that they like to get together.

SOLNESS.

Well. But that did not suit me. For I had use for Ragnar, myself, and for the old man too. He is overly smart in calculations as to carrying capacity and volume and such deviltry, you know.

DR. HERDAL.

Oh, yes. I suppose that all belongs to the trade.

SOLNESS.

So it does. But Ragnar was bound to begin for himself. There was no help for that.

DR. HERDAL.

But he is with you still?

SOLNESS.

Yes. I will explain. One day, Kaja Foslie came up here to see them about some matter. She had never been here before. And when I observed how very much the young people were in love with each other, the idea struck me, if I could get her in the office, perhaps Ragnar would remain here also.

DR. HERDAL.

That was a pretty reasonable idea.

SOLNESS.

Yes. But I did not utter one word about it to anyone. I only looked at her, and wished intensely that I had her working in the office. Then I began to talk friendly to her about something wholly insignificant. And she went away.

DR. HERDAL.

Well?

SOLNESS.

But the next day towards dusk, after the old man and Ragnar had gone home, she came up here and acted as if I had struck a bargain with her.

DR. HERDAL.

A bargain? About what?

SOLNESS.

Exactly about what I had wished in my own mind, but had not uttered a single, solitary syllable about.

DR. HERDAL.

That was strange.

SOLNESS.

Yes, was it not? She only wanted to know what she should do here. Asked if she could commence the next day, and the like of that.

DR. HERDAL.

Do you not think she did it, because she liked to be with her sweetheart?

SOLNESS.

That occurred to me at first. But no, that was not it. After she had come to me she gradually slipped entirely away from him.

DR. HERDAL.

Slipped over towards you then?

SOLNESS.

Yes, entirely. I notice, that she seems to know when I look at her, even when I stand behind her and she can not possibly see me. She trembles, when I come near her. What do you think of *that*?

DR. HERDAL.

Hm,—that can be explained.

SOLNESS.

Well, the other ~~matter~~? The fact, that she believed I had told her; what I only had desired and willed in absolute silence, internally—only to myself,—what do you have to say about that? Can you explain anything like that, Dr. Herdal?

DR. HERDAL.

No, I shall not undertake to do that.

SOLNESS.

I thought as much. That is the reason I never have mentioned it before. But it is so devilish

troublesome for me in the long run, you see. Here I must go day after day and pretend to—and it is such a pity on her, poor girl. *(violently)* But I can do nothing else, for if she gets away from me, then Ragnar is gone too.

DR. HERDAL.

And you have never told your wife the true inwardness of this.

SOLNESS.

No.

DR. HERDAL.

Why, in the name of all that is good, do you not?

SOLNESS.

(Looks fixedly at him and says in a low tone)

Because it seems to me that there is a beneficent self-torture in allowing Aline to wrong me in this matter.

DR. HERDAL.

(Shaking his head.)

Well, this is all the most confounded Greek to me.

SOLNESS.

Well, you see, it is like part payment on an immense terrific indebtedness—

DR. HERDAL.

To your wife—

SOLNESS.

Yes. And it seems to ease my soul. I can breathe more freely after such an occurrence, it seems.

DR. HERDAL.

Well, so help me Moses, if I can understand a word of what you say.

SOLNESS.

Well, then we will not speak any more about this.

(He saunters across the floor, returns and stops near the table)

SOLNESS.

(Looks at the doctor with a cunning smile)

I suppose you think you have got me out on slippery ice now, doctor?

DR. HERDAL.

(Somewhat provoked)

On the ice? I do not understand that any better than I did the rest, Mr. Solness.

SOLNESS.

Oh, speak out, man. For I have noticed it long ago, you see.

DR. HERDAL.

What have you noticed?

SOLNESS.

(Slowly and in a subdued tone)

That you cunningly busy yourself with watching me.

DR. HERDAL.

I? Why, in the name of all that is good, should I do that?

SOLNESS.

Because you believe that I - (Impetuously) do - n it, because you believe the same of me as my wife does.

DR. HERDAL.

And what does she believe of you?

SOLNESS.

She has commenced to believe that I am, a little—a little—sick.

DR. HERDAL.

Sick? You? She has not spoken a word to me about that. What should be the matter with you, my friend?

SOLNESS.

(Leans on the back of the chair and whispers)

Aline imagines that I am insane. That is exactly what she thinks.

DR. HERDAL.

(Rising)

But my dear Mr. Solness—

SOLNESS.

Yes, by all that is holy, that is the exact truth. And that she has succeeded in making you believe too. Ah, my dear doctor, I can assure you that I have found it out long ago. For it is no easy task to deceive me, let me tell you.

DR. HERDAL.

(Looks astonished at him)

Never, Mr. Solness, I assure you, has anything like that occurred to me.

SOLNESS.

(With an incredulous smile)

Really?

DR. HERDAL.

No, never. And I am sure your wife has not any such idea. I would almost swear that she has not.

SOLNESS.

Well, you would better not do that. For in a sense you see she might perhaps have cause for believing something like that.

DR. HERDAL.

Well, I must say—

SOLNESS.

(Interrupting, swinging his right hand)

Well, well, my dear doctor, do not let us go any farther in this affair. It is better for each of us to stick to his own ideas. (Changing into a quiet mirth) But see here, doctor,—hm—

DR. HERDAL.

Well ?

SOLNESS.

If you do not believe that I am a kind of—sick—crack-brained—crazy and the like, you know—

DR. HERDAL.

What then ?

SOLNESS.

Well, then you must certainly imagine that I am an exceedingly happy man.

DR. HERDAL.

Would that be only a matter of imagination ?

SOLNESS.

(Laughing)

Oh, no ! Of course ! God bless you ! Just think, to be Master-builder Solness ! Halvard Solness ! Is not that something grand ?

DR. HERDAL.

Yes. I must really say, that as far as I can see, Dame Fortune has smiled on you without stint.

SOLNESS.

(Suppresses a broad smile)

So she has. I cannot complain of that good lady's conduct.

DR. HERDAL.

In the first place the old rookery burned down for you. And that was indeed fortunate.

SOLNESS.

(Soberly)

It was Aline's paternal home that burned. Don't forget that.

DR. HERDAL.

Yes, to her it must have given great grief.

SOLNESS.

She has not got over it yet. Not once in all these twelve or thirteen years.

DR. HERDAL.

What followed was perhaps the heaviest blow to her.

SOLNESS.

Well, one thing with the other.

DR. HERDAL.

But you, you could not but gain by it. You started in as a poor boy from the country, and now you lead every one in your business. I think, Mr. Solness, you must admit, that you have had good luck.

SOLNESS.

(Looks shyly at him)

Yes, but *that* is exactly what makes me fear and tremble.

DR. HERDAL

You fear? Because you have good luck?

SOLNESS

Early and late it worries me. For at some time it will turn around, you see.

DR. HERDAL.

Nonsense! Where should the change come from?

SOLNESS.

(Firmly and determinedly)

It will come from the young people.

DR. HERDAL.

Pshaw! The young! You are not out of date yet, by any means. Oh, no! You stand now on a more solid foundation than ever before.

SOLNESS.

The change will come. I have a presentiment of it. I feel that it is drawing near. Some one will commence to cry,—“Stand back and give me a chance!” and then all the others will follow in his wake, and threaten and yell, “make room—make room—make room for us.” Yes, doctor, look out. Some day youth comes here and knocks at the door.

DR. HERDAL.

(Laughs)

Well, and what then?

SOLNESS.

What then? That is the last of Master-builder Solness.

(A knock at the door to the left)

SOLNESS.

(With a shudder)

What was that? Did you hear anything?

DR. HERDAL.

Somebody knocked.

SOLNESS.

(Louder)

Come in !

(HILDA WANGEL enters through the door from the hall. She is of medium height, slender, and has a fine form. Somewhat sunburnt. Dressed in tourist dress, with pinned-up skirt, a sailor's collar, and a small sailor hat. Knapsack slung on her back. Carries a plaid in a strap and a long mountain stick.)

HILDA WANGEL.

(Walks with brilliantly joyous eyes over towards Mr. Solness).

Good evening !

SOLNESS.

(Hesitatingly)

Good evening !

HILDA.

(Laughs)

I do really believe that you do not recognize me.

SOLNESS.

No, I must confess,—that just at this moment—

DR. HERDAL.

(Goes nearer)

But I recognize you, Miss—

HILDA.

(Pleased)

Well, if it is not you, who—

DR. HERDAL.

Of course, it is I. (To Solness) We met at the mountain cottages this summer. (To Hilda) Well, what became of the other ladies?

HILDA.

Oh, they went west.

DR. HERDAL.

I suppose they did not like the noise we made there that night.

HILDA.

No, I don't think they liked it very well.

DR. HERDAL.

And, you flirted with us quite a little bit.

HILDA.

Well, suppose I did. That was certainly more pleasant than to sit and knit socks with those old women.

DR. HERDAL.

(Laughs)

I fully agree with you.

SOLNESS.

Did you arrive in town this evening?

HILDA.

Yes, I just came in.

DR. HERDAL.

All alone, Miss Wangel?

HILDA.

Of course.

SOLNESS.

Wangel? Is your name Wangel?

HILDA.

(Looks merrily surprised at him)

Yes, of course it is.

SOLNESS.

Then, you are perhaps a daughter of the doctor at Lysanger.

HILDA.

(As before)

Why, yes, whose daughter should I be?

SOLNESS.

Ah, then we have met up there,—the summer I was there and built a steeple on the old church.

3*

HILDA.

(More serious)

Yes, that was the time, you know.

SOLNESS.

Well, that is a long time ago.

HILDA.

(Looking fixedly at him)

It is exactly ten years ago.

SOLNESS.

And then you were the merest child, I suppose.

HILDA.

I was twelve or thirteen years old, anyhow.

DR. HERDAL.

Is this the first time you have visited our city,
Miss Wangel?

HILDA.

Yes, it so happens.

SOLNESS.

And you have no acquaintances here?

HILDA.

None but you. Oh yes, I know your wife too.

SOLNESS.

Oh, you know *her* too.

HILDA.

Only very slightly, though. We stopped at the
same hotel at the Springs, for a few days—

SOLNESS.

Ah, in the mountains?

HILDA.

She said that I might visit her, if I should
ever come to the city. (Smiles) But that was hardly
necessary.

SOLNESS.

It is strange that she never mentioned *that*.

(Hilda places her stick behind the stove, unstraps her knapsack and deposits it and her plaid on the sofa. Doctor Herdal offers his assistance. Solness stands by, gazing at her.)

HILDA.

(Going over towards him)

May I stay here over night ?

SOLNESS.

I presume that can be arranged easily enough.

HILDA.

For I have no other dress than the one I have on. Well, of course I have a set of undergarments in my knapsack. But they need washing. They are very much soiled.

SOLNESS.

Well, we will find a way out of that trouble. I will inform my wife.

DR. HERDAL.

Then I will go and make my sick call in the meantime.

SOLNESS.

Yes, do that. And then you will come around on your way back ?

DR. HERDAL.

Yes, you may bet your last dollar on that. (Laughs)
Your prophecy came true after all, Mr. Solness.

SOLNESS.

How is that ?

DR. HERDAL.

Youth came and knocked at the door, at all events.

SOLNESS.

(Liveller)

Well, it was not meant in that way.

DR. HERDAL.

No, unquestionably not.

(Exit through hall door. Solness opens the door to the right and speaks into the next room.)

SOLNESS.

Aline ! Please come in here. There is a Miss Wangel here, whom you know.

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Coming to the door)

Who do you say is there ? (Sees Hilda) Ah, are you here, Miss Wangel ? (Goes nearer and greets her) So you came to the city after all ?

SOLNESS.

Miss Wangel has just arrived. And she asks if she may stay here over night.

MRS. SOLNESS.

With us ? With the greatest of pleasure.

SOLNESS.

So she can get her garments in order, you understand.

MRS. SOLNESS.

I will assist you as well as I can. That is only my duty. Your trunk will come later, I suppose.

HILDA.

I have no trunk.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Well, that can be arranged, I hope. But now you will have to get along with my husband, as well as you can, while I go to see about your room.

SOLNESS.

Can you not use one of the nurseries? They are all in order, you know.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, that is so. *There* is more room than is needed. (To Hilda) Please be seated and rest after your journey.

(Exit to the right)

(Hilda, with her hands behind her, saunters around the room, looking at the different objects. Solness remains standing at the table in front, also with his hands on his back, and follows her movements with his eyes.)

HILDA.

(Stops and looks at him)

So you have several nurseries here?

SOLNESS.

There are three of them in this house.

HILDA.

That is funny. You must have a terrible lot of youngsters here then?

SOLNESS.

No, we have no children. But now you can be our child for awhile.

HILDA.

For one night, yes. I shan't cry. I shall try to sleep like a rock.

SOLNESS.

Yes, you are very tired, I suppose.

HILDA.

Not at all. But I love to lie and dream, don't you know?

SOLNESS.

Do you often dream?

HILDA.

Oh, yes. Almost always.

SOLNESS.

What do you mostly dream about?

HILDA.

I won't tell you that to-night. Some other time—perhaps.

(She saunters across the floor, stops at the desk and rummages amongst the books and papers.)

SOLNESS.

(Goes nearer)

Are you searching for anything?

HILDA.

No, I am only looking at all these things. (Turns around) Perhaps it is not allowed?

SOLNESS.

Certainly, if it can give you pleasure.

HILDA.

Do you write in that big book?

SOLNESS.

No, my little book-keeper does that.

HILDA.

A woman?

SOLNESS.

(Smiles)

Yes, of course.

HILDA.

That you have here with you?

SOLNESS.

Yes.

HILDA.

Is she married?

SOLNESS.

No, she is a young lady.

HILDA.

Aha!

SOLNESS.

But I think she is going to be married soon.

HILDA.

Good for her!

SOLNESS.

But not very good for me. For then I will have no one to assist me.

HILDA.

Can't you get hold of another, who is just as good?

SOLNESS.

Perhaps you would stay here and write in the ledger?

HILDA.

(Looks over him)

Not much! I decline with thanks.—We will have none of that.

(She again saunters over the floor and seats herself in the rocker. Solness goes over toward the table)

HILDA.

(As if continuing)

—For, I suppose, there are other things to do here, than such work. (Looks smilingly up at him) Don't you think so too?

SOLNESS.

Of course. First of all, I suppose, you will go shopping, so as to replenish your wardrobe.

HILDA.

(Merrily)

No, I rather think I will let that go.

SOLNESS.

So ?

HILDA.

Yes, for I have spent all my money, you see.

SOLNESS.

(Laughs)

Neither trunk nor money?

HILDA.

No, nothing of the kind. But, pshaw ! That doesn't matter now.

SOLNESS.

That is something I admire you for.

HILDA.

Only for that ?

SOLNESS.

Oh, for one thing and another. (Seats himself in the easy chair) Is your father still living ?

HILDA.

Yes, father is very much alive.

SOLNESS.

And now you probably intend to attend the university here?

HILDA.

No, that never occurred to me.

SOLNESS.

But you will remain here some time, I suppose ?

HILDA.

That depends.

(She sits a while rocking and looks at him seriously and at the same time with a suppressed smile. She then takes her hat off and places it on the table.)

HILDA.

Mr. Solness !

SOLNESS.

Well ?

HILDA.

Do you suffer from a defective memory ?

SOLNESS.

Defective memory ? No, not that I am aware of.

HILDA.

Then, don't you wish to speak to me at all on that subject ?

SOLNESS.

What subject ?

HILDA.

About what happened at Lysanger.

SOLNESS.

(Momentarily startled)

At Lysanger ? (Carelessly) Well, there is not much to say about that, it seems to me.

HILDA.

(With a reproachful glance)

Why do you talk like that ?

SOLNESS.

Well, why don't *you* speak about it ?

HILDA.

When the steeple was completed we had a great feast—

SOLNESS.

Yes, I shall not easily forget that day.

HILDA.

(Smiles)

Not ? That is very kind of *you*.

SOLNESS.

Kind ?

HILDA.

There was music in the churchyard and many, many hundred people. We school-girls were all dressed in white, and then we all carried flags.

SOLNESS.

Yes, I remember the flags.

HILDA.

Then you went up the scaffolding. Up to the very highest scaffold. And you carried along a large wreath, and that wreath you placed on the weather-vane.

SOLNESS.

(Abruptly, interrupting)

I used to do that, those times. For it is an old custom, you see.

HILDA.

It was so wonderfully exciting to stand down among the graves and gaze up at you. Just think if he should fall down ! The master-builder himself !

SOLNESS.

(As if trying to divert his mind from the subject)

Yes,—yes, that might easily have happened. For one of those little she-devils, dressed in white, carried on, and hallooed up to me in such a manner—

HILDA.

(Sparklingly joyous)

“ Hurrah for Master-builder Solness ! ”—

SOLNESS.

—And waved her flag in such a wild manner, that it almost made me dizzy to look at it.

HILDA.

(In a low tone and seriously)

I was that little she-devil.

SOLNESS.

(Looks fixedly at her)

I am sure of that now. It must have been you.

HILDA.

(With life again)

For it was so awfully beautiful and exciting. I could not realise that there ever could exist a master-builder, who could construct such a terribly high steeple. And then that you yourself stood there at the uppermost hight, all alive. And that you did not turn the least bit dizzy, that was the very dizziest idea of them all.

SOLNESS.

How did you know so surely, that I was not—

HILDA.

(Indignantly)

No, fie! I felt it in my innermost heart. For if you had been, you could not have been singing when you stood at that terrible hight.

SOLNESS.

(Looks astonished at her)

Singing? Did I sing?

HILDA.

I should say you did.

SOLNESS.

(Shaking his head)

I never sang a tune in all my life.

HILDA.

Yes, you sang then. It sounded to me like music of harps in the air.

SOLNESS.

That is strange indeed !

HILDA.

(Silent a while, looks at him and says in a subdued tone)

But *then*—afterwards—*then* came the *real*, the great event.

SOLNESS.

The real event ?

HILDA.

(Sparklingly lively)

Yes, I do not need to remind you of that, I hope.

SOLNESS.

Oh, yes. Remind me a little of that too.

HILDA.

Do you not remember, that the citizens gave a grand dinner for you at the club?

SOLNESS.

Yes, that is so. That must have been the same afternoon, for I went away the next morning.

HILDA.

And then you were invited to our house to tea.

SOLNESS.

That is entirely correct, Miss Wangel. It is remarkable, how all these insignificant details have been imprinted on your memory.

HILDA.

Insignificant details ? You are a good one ! Perhaps it was an insignificant detail, that I *was* alone in the parlor, when you came ?

SOLNESS.

So you were alone there ?

HILDA.

(Without answering him)

You didn't call me a little she-devil then.

SOLNESS.

No, I don't suppose I did.

HILDA.

You said, I was too sweet for anything in that white dress. And that I looked like a little princess.

SOLNESS.

I am sure you did, Miss Wangel, and besides, I felt very happy that day—

HILDA.

And then you said, that, when I was a young lady, I should be *your* princess?

SOLNESS.

Aha! Did I say that too?

HILDA.

Yes, that is just what you said. And when I asked you, how long I should wait for you, you said that you would come back in ten years—as a troll—and carry me off. To Spain, or some such place. And there you would buy a kingdom for me. That is what you promised.

SOLNESS.

Yes, after a good dinner a person is apt to feel very flush. But did I really say all this?

HILDA.

(Smiles quietly)

Yes. And you further told me the name of the kingdom.

SOLNESS.

Well, what was it ?

HILDA.

Its name should be the kingdom of Orangia, you said.

SOLNESS.

Ah ! That was a very appetizing name.

HILDA.

No, I did not like it at all. For that sounded as if you were only making fun of me.

SOLNESS.

But I am pretty sure, that could not have been my intention.

HILDA.

No, I suppose not, especially from what you did afterwards—

SOLNESS.

But pray, tell me, what did I do after that?

HILDA.

Well, that is all I want to know, that you should have forgotten that too. Such things people must certainly remember, I should think.

SOLNESS.

Yes, yes. Only give me the least little bit of a starter and perhaps—Well ?

HILDA.

(Looks firmly at him)

You kissed me, Mr. Solness !

SOLNESS.

(With open mouth rising from the chair)

Did I ?

HILDA.

Yes, that is just what you did. You took me in your arms, bent my head back and kissed me, many, many times!

SOLNESS.

No, but my dear Miss Wangel—

HILDA.

(Rising)

You don't mean to deny it, do you?

SOLNESS.

Yes, I must say, that I do deny that.

HILDA.

(With contempt in her eyes)

Well, I declare!

(She turns around and walks slowly over to the stove, where she remains standing with her back to him, unmovable and with her hands folded behind her. A short pause.)

SOLNESS.

(Walks cautiously up behind her)

Miss Wangel!

HILDA.

(Is silent and does not move)

SOLNESS.

Do not stand there like a marble statue. What you have told me now must be something you have dreamed. (Lays his hand on her arm) Listen—

HILDA.

(Makes an impatient motion with her arm)

SOLNESS.

(As if an idea suddenly struck him)

Or—wait—! There is something mysterious here—perhaps—

HILDA.

(Does not move)

SOLNESS.

(In lower tone but with emphasis)

I must have *thought* of all this. I must have *wished* it,—have *desired* it,—have *wanted* it. And then—can that be the case?

HILDA.

(Is still silent)

SOLNESS.

(Impatiently)

Well! Then, by all that is holy,—I have *done* it too.

HILDA.

(Turns her head a little but without looking at him)

You confess then, Sir?

SOLNESS.

Yes, all that you wish me to.

HILDA.

That you put your arms around me?

SOLNESS.

Yes, yes!

HILDA.

That you bent my head back?

SOLNESS.

Very far back.

HILDA.

And kissed me?

SOLNESS.

Yes, I did.

HILDA.

Many times?

SOLNESS.

As many times as you want me to confess to.

HILDA.

(Turns quickly around with the sparklingly joyful expression in her eyes again)

Well, you see, I coaxed it out of you at last.

SOLNESS.

(Smiling faintly)

Yes, just to think that I could forget such things.

HILDA.

(Again a little piqued, goes away from him)

Oh, I suppose you have kissed so many in your life.

SOLNESS.

No, you must not think so ill of me.

(Hilda seats herself in the easy chair. Solness remains standing, leaning on the back of the rocker.)

SOLNESS.

(Observing her closely)

Miss Wangel?

HILDA.

Yes.

SOLNESS.

How was it now? What more was there between us two?

HILDA.

Nothing more. You must know that. The other guests came in and then—pshaw!

SOLNESS.

Yes, that is so, the other guests came! And I, who had forgotten that too.

HILDA.

Oh, you have not forgotten anything. You only feel ashamed. Such things can never be forgotten.

SOLNESS.

No! One would think they could not be forgotten.

HILDA.

(With new life, looks at him)

Or perhaps you have forgotten what date it was too?

SOLNESS.

The date—?

HILDA.

Yes, the date you hoisted the wreath on the steeple? Come now! Tell me quick!

SOLNESS.

Hm!—The exact date I have really forgotten. I only know it was ten years ago, some time in the fall.

HILDA.

(Who has nodded her head repeatedly)

It was ten years ago. The 19th of September!

SOLNESS.

Yes, I guess it must have been thereabouts. You remember the date too? (Hesitates) But wait!—Yes!—To-day we write the 19th of September.

HILDA.

Yes, that is just what we do. And the ten years have gone; and you came not, as you had promised me.

SOLNESS.

Promised you? Frightened you with, you mean.

HILDA.

I don't think that was anything to be frightened about.

SOLNESS.

Well, or fooled you with.

HILDA.

Was that all you wanted ? To fool me ?

SOLNESS.

Well, or joke a little with you. So help me God, if I remember anything of it. But something of that kind it must have been. For, of course, you were only a child then.

HILDA.

Oh, I was perhaps not such a mere child either. Not such a kid as you think.

SOLNESS.

(Looks searchingly at her)

Have you really, in full earnest, expected that I would return ?

HILDA.

(Hiding a half teasing smile)

Of course. I had expected *that* much of you anyway.

SOLNESS.

That I would come to your home and carry you off?

HILDA.

Exactly as a troll, yes.

SOLNESS.

And make you a princess ?

HILDA.

That was what you promised me ! Was it not ?

SOLNESS.

And give you a kingdom too ?

HILDA.

(Looks up toward the ceiling)

Why not ? For it did not necessarily have to be such an ordinary real kingdom.

SOLNESS.

But another kingdom, just as good?

HILDA.

Yes, at least just as good. (Looks askance at him) I thought, that if you could build the highest steeple in the world, you could also see your way clear to some kind of a kingdom.

SOLNESS.

(Shakes his head)

I do not know, if I can ever understand you rightly, Miss Wangel.

HILDA.

Can't you? I don't think that is any trick at all.

SOLNESS.

For I cannot make up my mind, as to whether you mean all that you say, or whether you are only jesting.

HILDA.

Fooling you perhaps? I too?

SOLNESS.

Yes, that is it. Fooling! Both of us! (Looks at her) Have you known for a long time, that I was married?

HILDA.

Yes, I have known that all the time. Why do you ask me that?

SOLNESS.

No, no! It only occurred to me. That is all.
(Gazes earnestly at her and says quietly) Why did you come?

HILDA.

Because I want my kingdom. The time is up. ?

SOLNESS

(Laughs involuntarily)

You are a good one, you are.

HILDA.

(Merrily)

Pony up my kingdom, Mr. Master-builder! (Pats impatiently with her fingers on the table) The kingdom on the table!

SOLNESS.

(Pushes the rocker nearer to her and sits down)

Now, seriously, why have you come? What is it you really want to do here?

HILDA.

Well, to begin with, I want to go around and look at all you have built.

SOLNESS.

Then you will be quite busy running around.

HILDA.

Yes, I understand you have built a great deal.

SOLNESS.

So I have. Mostly in later years.

HILDA.

Many steeples too? Such terribly high steeples?

SOLNESS.

No, I build no steeples now. And no churches, neither.

HILDA.

What are you building now then ?

SOLNESS.

Homes for human beings.

HILDA.

(Reflecting)

Could you not put some kind of steeples on those homes too ?

SOLNESS.

(Starting)

What do you mean by that ?

HILDA.

I mean something that points towards the sky with a vane at a dizzy hight.

SOLNESS.

(Ruminating)

Remarkable enough, that you should say *that!* For that is just what I would like the best.

HILDA.

(Impatiently)

But why don't you do it then ?

SOLNESS.

(Shaking his head)

No, for people don't want it.

HILDA.

Just think, that they don't want that !

SOLNESS.

(Easier)

But now I am building myself a new home, right across from here.

HILDA.

For yourself ?

SOLNESS.

Yes. It is nearly completed. And on that house there is a tower.

HILDA.

A high tower ?

SOLNESS.

Yes.

HILDA.

Terribly high ?

SOLNESS.

I think people will say, it is too high for a home.

HILDA.

I must take a look at that the very first thing in the morning.

SOLNESS.

(Resting his chin on his hand and gazing at her)

Tell me, Miss Wangel, what is your name ?
Your christian name I mean.

HILDA.

My name is Hilda.

SOLNESS.

(As before)

Hilda ? Is that so ?

HILDA.

Don't you recollect that. You called me Hilda yourself. That day you were naughty.

SOLNESS.

Did I really ?

HILDA.

But then you said "Little Hilda," and I did not like that.

SOLNESS.

Ah! You didn't like that, Miss Hilda?

HILDA.

No, not on that occasion. But I think "Princess Hilda" will sound really pretty.

SOLNESS.

Yes, yes! Princess Hilda of—of—what was it the name of the kingdom should be?

HILDA.

Pshaw! *That* foolish kingdom. I don't want anything to do with that. I want another, I do.

SOLNESS.

(Leans back in the chair and still gazes at her)

Is it not strange? The more I reflect upon it, the plainer it seems to me, that I for many long years have gone and tortured myself with—hm—

HILDA.

With what?

SOLNESS.

With trying to bring back to my mind something that I knew must have happened, but which it seemed I had forgotten all about. But I never could fathom what it was.

HILDA.

You should have tied a knot on your handkerchief, Mr. Master-builder!

SOLNESS.

In that case I should have spent my time studying on what that knot meant.

HILDA.

Oh yes! I suppose there are such trolls in the world too.

SOLNESS.

(Rising slowly.)

It was so kind, that you came to me now.

HILDA.

(With a deep glance)

Was it kind?

SOLNESS.

For I have sat here all alone and gazed so helplessly on every thing. (With more feeling) I will tell you, I have lately been so afraid of the young.

HILDA.

Pshaw! Are the young anything to be afraid of?

SOLNESS.

Yes, that is just what they are. Therefore I have locked my doors. (Mysteriously) You must know that the young will come here some day and make a great racket at the door. They will break into my house.

HILDA.

If that is so, I think, you had better go and open the door for them.

SOLNESS.

Open the door?

HILDA.

Yes, so the young can come in, with your good will.

SOLNESS.

No, the young,—they are retribution, you see. They come in advance of the turn in my luck. They come under a new banner.

HILDA.

(Rising, looking at him intensely, says with a light tremor about her lips)

Can you use *me* for anything, Master-builder?

SOLNESS.

Yes! Now I can. For you also came as under a new banner. The young against the young—will—

(Dr. Herdal enters by the hall door)

DR. HERDAL.

Well, are you and the young lady still here?

SOLNESS.

Yes, we have had a good deal to talk about.

HILDA.

Both old and new.

DR. HERDAL.

Indeed!

HILDA.

Oh, it has been so awfully interesting; for Mr. Solness has such an extraordinary good memory. He will remember the smallest details without the least prompting.

(Mrs. Solness enters from the door to the right.)

MRS. SOLNESS.

Your room is in order now, Miss Wangel.

HILDA.

Oh, how kind you are to me.

SOLNESS.

(To his wife)

The nursery?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, the central nursery.

SOLNESS.

(Nods to Hilda)

Hilda shall sleep in the nursery.

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Looks at him)

Hilda?

SOLNESS.

Yes, Miss Wangel's name is Hilda. I have known her since she was a little child.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Really? Well, please step into the dining-room. Tea is ready.

(She takes Dr. Herdal's arm and goes out to the right.)

(Hilda in the meantime has gathered up her knapsack and plaid.)

HILDA.

(Low and quick to Solness)

Is it true, what you said? *Can* you use me for anything?

SOLNESS.

(Takes the parcels from her)

You are the one I have most sorely missed,—these many years.

HILDA.

(Looks at him with great surprise in her eyes and claps her hands)

But, you great beautiful world—

SOLNESS.

(Expectantly)

What?

HILDA.

I have then found my kingdom.

SOLNESS.
(Involuntarily)

Hilda ?

HILDA.
(The tremor again appears on her lips)

Almost—

(Exit to the right. Solness follows.)

ACT II.

(An elegantly furnished sitting room in Solness' house. A glass door in the back ground leads to the veranda and down to the garden. To the right a cut off corner, with a recess, in which a large window and a flower-stand. A corresponding cut off corner to the left, in which a narrow door with draperies. On both sides of the stage ordinary doors. In front to the right a large pier-glass. Flowers and plants in different parts of the room. In front to the left a sofa, a table and chairs. Further back a book-case. Out from the wall, some distance in front of the recess, a small table and chairs. It is early in the forenoon.)

(SOLNESS is seated at the small table and is looking at the plans in Ragnar's portfolio. He is turning the leaves and scans some of them very closely. MRS. SOLNESS, with a watering pot in her hand is moving about, quietly arranging the plants. She is dressed in black as before. Her hat, wrap and parasol are on a chair near the mirror. Solness follows her several times with his eyes. They are silent.)

(KAJA FOSLIE enters quietly through the door to the right.)

SOLNESS.

(Turning half around)

Ah, *you* are here!

KAJA.

I only wished to let you know that I had come.

SOLNESS.

Very well. Is Ragnar at the office?

KAJA.

Not yet. He had to wait for the doctor. But he will come later to find out—

SOLNESS.

How is the old gentleman to day?

KAJA.

Very poorly. He asks to be excused, as the doctor says, he has to keep his bed for a day or so.

SOLNESS.

Certainly! Don't let him get up. You may go to your work now.

KAJA.

Yes. (Hesitates at the door) Would you like to see Ragnar, when he comes?

SOLNESS.

No, I am not aware of any special reason for seeing him.

(Kaja leaves through door to the left.)

(Solness continues to turn over the leaves of the portfolio.)

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Over by the plants)

I wonder if he too will die soon.

SOLNESS.

(Looks at her)

He too? What do you mean?

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Without answering)

Yes, old Brovik will surely die now, Halvard.

SOLNESS.

My dear Aline, ought you not to take your morning constitutional about this time?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, I suppose so.

(She continues arranging the plants)

SOLNESS.

(Bent over the plants)

Is she still asleep?

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Looking at him)

Is it to Miss Wangel you refer ?

SOLNESS.

(Carelessly)

I just happened to think of her.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Miss Wangel has been up for quite a while.

SOLNESS.

She has ?

MRS. SOLNESS.

When I was in her room, she was mending her dress.

(She goes over to the mirror and commences to put on her hat.)

SOLNESS.

(After a short pause)

Well, we finally found use for the nursery after all, Aline.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, we did.

SOLNESS.

And I think it better, than to have them stand empty all the time, don't you ?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, this emptiness is awful. You are quite right.

SOLNESS.

(Closes the portfolio, rises and draws nearer)

You will see, Aline, that hereafter it will be better for us. Much cosier. Easier to live. Especially for *you*.

MRS. SOLNESS.

(With a suspicious look)

Hereafter ?

SOLNESS.

Yes, believe me Aline—

MRS. SOLNESS.

Do you mean, because *she* has come.

SOLNESS.

(Forced)

I mean, of course,—when we have moved into the new house.

MRS. SOLNESS.

(with a wrap in her hand)

Do you think, Halvard, that it will be better *then* ?

SOLNESS.

I cannot help but think so. And I guess, you do the same.

MRS. SOLNESS.

I do not think anything at all about the new house.

SOLNESS.

(Gloomily)

That is bad news to me, my dear. For it is certainly mainly on your account I have built it.

(He proffers his assistance with the wrap.)

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Drawing back)

You really do a great deal too much on my account.

SOLNESS.

(Impetuously)

No, you must not speak that way, Aline. I can not bear to hear you say that.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Very well! I shall not say anything about it then.

SOLNESS.

But I insist, that I am right. You will see, that it will be very pleasant for you in the new house.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Oh, Lord! Pleasure for me—

SOLNESS.

(Zealously)

Yes, yes! That you may be sure of—as there will be so many things there, that will remind you of your own—

MRS. SOLNESS.

—Of the house, which had been my father's and mother's, and which burned down—all—all burned down.

SOLNESS.

(Quietly)

Yes, poor Aline, that was a terribly hard blow to you.

MRS. SOLNESS.

(In a very plaintive voice)

You may build as much as you please, Halvard; but you will never be able to build a real home for me again.

SOLNESS.

Well! Then let us not talk any more about that.

MRS. SOLNESS.

We never have done so. For you always avoid it as much as possible.

SOLNESS.

(Stops suddenly and looks sharply at her)

Do I? And why should I avoid it?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Oh, I understand you perfectly, Halvard. You like to spare me, and excuse me too. All you can.

SOLNESS.

(Surprised)

You? Is it of yourself you are speaking, Aline?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, it must be of myself, of course.

SOLNESS.

(Ejaculating)

Has it come even to this?

MRS. SOLNESS.

As far as the old house is concerned, it is no use to trouble about that. When misfortune comes—

SOLNESS.

You are right. No one can keep bad luck out, when it once knocks at the door.

MRS. SOLNESS.

But the terrible consequences of the fire! Oh, this horror, this horror!

SOLNESS.

Don't think of that, Aline.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, that is just what I must think of. And for once get a chance to speak of it too. For it seems to me to be a burden, I am unable to carry any longer. And then not to be able to feel, that I can ever forgive myself.

SOLNESS.

You?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, for I owed a double duty, one to you and one to the little ones. I should have steeled myself. Should not have allowed the fright to so completely overpower me. Nor the grief over the loss of my home. (Wrings her hands) Oh, if I had only had the strength, Halvard!

SOLNESS.

(In a low voice, nearer)

Aline, you must promise me that you will never think those thoughts. Do promise me that!

MRS. SOLNESS.

Oh yes—promise, promise! Yes, one can promise anything.

SOLNESS.

Oh, this is horrible! Never a sun-beam. Not as much as a flashlight even in our home.

MRS. SOLNESS.

This *is* no home, Halvard.

SOLNESS.

No, that is so. (Heavily) And God knows, if you are not right, when you say, there will be no improvement in the new house either.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Never!—Just as empty!—Just as desolate!—There as here!

SOLNESS.

(Impetuously)

But why in the name of all that is good did we build then? Can you tell me that?

MRS. SOLNESS.

No, that you will have to answer yourself.

SOLNESS.

(Impetuously)

What do you mean by that, Aline?

MRS. SOLNESS.

What do I mean?

SOLNESS.

Yes, d—n it! You said that so strangely, as if it had a secret meaning.

MRS. SOLNESS.

No, I assure you—

SOLNESS.

(Nearer)

No need of that! I know, what I know. And I have both eyes and ears. Don't fool yourself.

MRS. SOLNESS.

But what do you mean?

SOLNESS.

(Places himself in front of her)

Do you not perhaps look for a sly, secret meaning in the most innocent word, I utter?

MRS. SOLNESS.

I, you say! Do I do that?

SOLNESS.

(Laughing)

Ha, ha, ha! But of course, that is not so strange, when you have to get along, as best you can, with a sick husband.

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Anxiously)

Sick? Are you sick, Halvard?

SOLNESS.

(Angrily)

A half crazy husband then.—An insane husband! Call me what you please.

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Groping for the chair and seating herself)

Halvard,—for heavens sake!—

SOLNESS.

But you are on the wrong track, both of you. Both you and the doctor. There is nothing of the kind the matter with me.

(He walks to and fro. Mrs. Solness' eyes follow him anxiously. He then goes over to her.)

SOLNESS.

(Quietly)

There is really nothing that ails me.

MRS. SOLNESS.

No, I believe you. But why are you troubled, my dear?

SOLNESS.

It is this, that I often am about to drop under this terrible burden of debt—

MRS. SOLNESS.

Debt, you say! You do not owe anyone a penny.

SOLNESS.

I am over head and ears in debt—to you—to you, Aline.

MRS. SOLNESS.

What mystery is this? (Rising slowly) You might just as well speak out at once.

SOLNESS.

But there is no mystery. I have never harmed you. Not intentionally at least. But nevertheless

I feel, as if a heavy burden of guilt and crime crushed me down—down—every moment farther down.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Crime against me?

SOLNESS.

Mostly against you.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Then you must certainly be sick, Halvard.

SOLNESS.

Must be—or something of that kind. (Looks at the door to the right, as it opens) Ah, here comes a ray of sunlight.

(Hilda Wangel enters. She has altered her dress somewhat. The skirt of her dress is not pinned up.)

HILDA.

Good morning, Master-builder!

SOLNESS.

(Nods)

Slept well?

HILDA.

Simply lovely—as in a cradle! I have stretched my limbs—as if I were a princess.

SOLNESS.

(Smiles)

You must feel well then?

HILDA.

I should say so.

SOLNESS.

And did you dream too?

HILDA.

Oh, yes. But *that* was horrible.

SOLNESS.

So ?

HILDA.

Yes, for I dreamt, that I fell over a terribly high, steep precipice. Do you ever dream anything like that ?

SOLNESS.

Yes, sometimes.

HILDA.

It is so awfully exciting—when you sink and sink—and sink.

SOLNESS.

It has a blood curdling sensation to me.

HILDA.

Do you draw your limbs up while it lasts ?

SOLNESS.

Yes, as tight as I can.

HILDA.

So do I.

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Taking her parasol)

Well, I must go now, Halvard. (To Hilda) I will bring home some little things that you may need.

HILDA.

(Attempting to embrace her)

Oh, you dear, lovely Mrs. Solness ! You are too kind to me—too kind indeed !

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Freeing herself from the embrace)

Far from it. It is merely my duty. And that is the reason I do it willingly.

HILDA.

(A little vexed, pouting)

But I cannot see, why this dress is not good enough for the street now. All the work I have spent on it this morning! Don't you think so?

MRS. SOLNESS.

To tell the truth, I am afraid you might attract attention.

HILDA.

Pshaw! Nothing else? That will just be fun.

SOLNESS.

(In bad humor)

Yes, but people might get it into their heads, that you were crazy too.

HILDA.

Crazy! Are there then so many crazy people in this town?

SOLNESS.

(Points at his forehead)

Here you see one.

HILDA.

You?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Please, Halvard, don't talk that way.

SOLNESS.

Haven't you noticed that yet?

HILDA.

No, indeed not. (Seems to weigh something in her mind and laughs) Yes, when I come to think of it, perhaps on one particular subject.

SOLNESS.

Do you hear that, Aline?

MRS. SOLNESS.

On what subject may that be, Miss Wangel ?

HILDA.

That I won't tell.

SOLNESS.

Oh, yes. Out with it.

HILDA.

No, thanks ! I am not crazy enough for that.

MRS. SOLNESS.

When you are alone, I guess she will tell you, Halvard.

SOLNESS.

Do you really— ?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Certainly. As you have been acquainted with her so long. Ever since she was a child you said, I believe.

(Exit through the door to the left.)

HILDA.

(After a short pause)

Your wife does not like me at all, does she ?

SOLNESS.

What makes you think so ? Did you notice any dislike on her part ?

HILDA.

Didn't you notice it yourself ?

SOLNESS.

(Evasively)

Aline has become so shy of everyone of late years.

HILDA.

Is she shy too ?

SOLNESS.

But if you could only learn to know her, you would like her, for she is really good—and so kind.

HILDA.

(Impatiently)

But if she is kind, why did she want to say that about duty?

SOLNESS.

Duty?

HILDA.

Yes, didn't you hear her say, she would buy something for me, because it was her duty. I cannot bear that ugly, mean word.

SOLNESS.

Why not?

HILDA.

Because it sounds so cold, so sharp, so stinging. Duty—duty—duty! Don't you think so yourself. It is just as if it stabs me, through and through.

SOLNESS.

Hm!—I have never looked at it in that light before.

HILDA.

Yes it is. And if she is as kind, as you say she is, why should she say anything like that?

SOLNESS.

But, my child, what should she have said?

HILDA.

She might have said, that she would do it, because she liked me so very, very much. That is what she might have said. Something that would have warmed my heart, you understand.

SOLNESS.

(Looks)

Is that what you crave?

HILDA.

Precisely. (She walks over to the book-case, and looks at the books) You have a great many books.

SOLNESS.

Yes, I have a few.

HILDA.

Do you read them all?

SOLNESS.

Some time ago—I tried to. Do you read much?

HILDA.

No, not at all. Not now any more, for I can not find any sense in it.

SOLNESS.

That is just the way with me.

(Hilda saunters around, stops at the small table, opens the portfolio and turns a few leaves)

HILDA.

Is all of this your work?

SOLNESS.

No, a young assistant, whom I have, has made all of those plans.

HILDA.

One you have taught yourself?

SOLNESS.

Yes, I suppose he has learned some from me too.

HILDA.

(Seating herself)

I suppose he must be very clever then. (Looks at one of the plans) Is he not?

SOLNESS.

I have seen them worse. For all I need of him—

HILDA.

Yes, he must be awfully clever.

SOLNESS.

Do you think you can see that from the plans?

HILDA.

Pshaw! Those hieroglyphics! But when he has had such a teacher as you—

SOLNESS.

Bah! For all of that, he might not be. There are many here, who have grown up under my instruction, but they are poor sticks for all of that.

HILDA.

(Looks at him and shakes her head)

Well, for the life of me I cannot understand, how you can be so foolish.

SOLNESS.

Foolish? Do you consider me so very foolish?

HILDA.

Yes, I do. When you can go on and be the teacher of all these fellows—

SOLNESS.

(Startled)

And why not?

HILDA.

No, Sir. What is that good for anyway? No one else but you should be allowed to build. You should stand all alone. Do it all yourself. That is where I should want to place you.

SOLNESS.

(Involuntarily)

Hilda?

HILDA

Well?

SOLNESS.

Tell me how you conceived this idea.

HILDA.

Do you think it so foolish then?

SOLNESS.

No. Not that. But now I will tell you something.

HILDA.

Well?

SOLNESS.

I go around here—incessantly—in silence and solitude—with that identical idea.

HILDA.

That does not strike me as anything strange.

SOLNESS.

(Looks searchingly at her)

And that you have already noticed, I suppose.

HILDA.

Not at all.

SOLNESS.

But a while ago, when you said you thought I was—a little cracked on one particular subject.

HILDA.

Oh! It was something entirely different I then had in my mind.

SOLNESS.

And what was that?

HILDA.

Never mind that now.

SOLNESS.

(Walks across the floor)

. Very well ! Just as you say. (Stops at the bay window)
Come over here, I wish to show you something.

HILDA.

(Goes nearer)

What is it ?

SOLNESS.

(Points)

Do you see yonder in the garden ?

HILDA.

Yes.

SOLNESS.

Right opposite the stone-quarry—

HILDA.

That new house, you mean ?

SOLNESS.

Yes, the one being built. Nearly completed.

HILDA.

It has an immense tower it seems to me.

SOLNESS.

The scaffolding is still there.

HILDA

Is that your new house ?

SOLNESS.

Yes.

HILDA.

The house you soon are going to move into ?

SOLNESS.

Yes.

HILDA.

(Looks at him)

Are there nurseries in that house too ?

SOLNESS.

Three of them, just as in this.

HILDA.

And no children?

SOLNESS.

None. And there are none coming.

HILDA.

(With a partial smile)

Yes, is it not, as I said—?

SOLNESS.

What?

HILDA.

That you are just a little bit loony anyhow?

SOLNESS.

Was it that you meant?

HILDA.

Yes, I thought of all the empty nurseries, where
I spent the night.

SOLNESS.

(In a lower tone)

We have had children,—Aline and I.

HILDA.

(Looks excited at him)

You have?

SOLNESS.

Two little boys. They were both of the same age.

HILDA.

Twins then?

SOLNESS.

Yes, twins. It is now twelve or thirteen
years ago.

HILDA.

(Cautiously)

And both of them are—? You haven't them any more?

SOLNESS.

(With quiet emotion)

We only had them about a fortnight, or hardly that even. (Ejaculating) Oh, Hilda, what a blessing to me, that you came. For finally I have found a person I can speak to.

HILDA.

Can you not do *that* to—to *her*?

SOLNESS.

Not of this. Not as I must to someone. (With a sigh) And not of many other matters either.

HILDA.

Was it only *this* you meant, when you said you were in need of me?

SOLNESS.

Perhaps that mostly. That is to say, yesterday. For to day I do not know for certain. (Breaking off) Come here and let us sit down, Hilda. Please take a seat in the sofa. There you have a full view of the garden.

(Hilda sits down in the sofa corner.)

SOLNESS.

(Draws a chair nearer)

Will you listen to me a moment?

HILDA.

Yes, I love to sit here and hear you talk.

SOLNESS.

(Sits down)

Very well. Then I will tell you all.

HILDA.

Now I have a full view of both the garden and of yourself, Mr. Solness. Tell me then—quick!

SOLNESS.

(Pointing towards the bay window)

Yonder, on that hill—where you see that new building going up—

HILDA.

Yes?

SOLNESS.

—There Aline and I lived the first years of our married life in an old house, which had belonged to her mother, and which we inherited from her, and this immense garden was also a part of our inheritance.

HILDA.

Was there a tower on *that* house too?

SOLNESS.

No, not a sign of one. It was a large, dreary, homely, old wooden box in outward appearance, but, when you once came inside, it was a pretty snug and cosy home after all.

HILDA.

Did you tear down the old rookery then?

SOLNESS.

No, it burned down.

HILDA.

Entirely?

SOLNESS.

Yes.

HILDA.

Was that a great misfortune to you ?

SOLNESS.

That depends on how you look at it. My position to day as master-builder I owe to that fire.

HILDA.

Well, what else then ?

SOLNESS.

The two little boys were born a few days before.

HILDA.

The little twins ?

SOLNESS.

When they came into this world, they were healthy and thriving. And they kept on growing from day to day, so we could not help seeing it.

HILDA.

Yes, it is wonderful how fast children grow the first days.

SOLNESS.

It was the most beautiful sight one could see in his dreams. Aline and the two together in one bed ! But then came the night of the fire—

HILDA.

(Excited)

What happened ? Tell me ! Did anyone perish in the flames ?

SOLNESS.

No, all were saved and got out of the house well enough.

HILDA.

Well, what then ?

SOLNESS.

The fright had a most terrific effect on Aline. The noise—the sudden moving—and that in a terribly cold night.—For both she and the little ones had to be carried out in their bed, just as they were.

HILDA.

Could they not stand that?

SOLNESS.

Yes, they stood it all right. But Aline contracted a serious fever. The fever coursed through her veins and poisoned her milk. She insisted on nursing them herself. For it was her duty, she said. And both our little boys (wringing his hands) —they—they—

HILDA.

They could not stand *that*?

SOLNESS.

No, *that* they could not stand. That is what took them from us.

HILDA.

It must have been a terrible blow to you.

SOLNESS.

Hard enough for me. But ten times harder for Aline. (He clenches his fist in rage) Oh, that such a thing could be allowed to happen in this world! (Firmly) After that day I did not like to build churches any more.

HILDA.

Perhaps you did not like to build the steeple in our town either?

SOLNESS.

Not overly much. I know how happy and easy I felt, when it was completed.

HILDA.

That I know, too.

SOLNESS.

And I never—never build any such structures now. Neither churches nor steeples.

HILDA.

(Nods slowly)

Only houses, where people may live—

SOLNESS.

Only homes for men and women, Hilda.

HILDA.

But homes with high towers and spires ?

SOLNESS.

That is what I prefer. (Continues in a lighter vein) Well you see, as I told you before,—the fire made me—as a master-builder, I mean.

HILDA.

Why do you not call yourself an architect, as all the others do ?

SOLNESS.

I have not learned the profession thoroughly enough. What I know, I have mostly picked up.

HILDA.

But you have left them all behind, anyway ?

SOLNESS.

Yes, after that fire ! I platted almost the whole of the garden into lots. And there I was allowed to build just as I wanted to; and in this I had, what you would call, excellent luck.

HILDA.

(Sending him a searching glance)

You must be a very happy man, the way fortune has smiled on you.

SOLNESS.

(Gloomily)

Happy? Do you also say that? Just as all the rest!

HILDA

Yes, I think you ought to be happy, if you only could forget those two little children.

SOLNESS.

(Slow)

Those two little boys! It is not easy to forget them, Hilda.

HILDA.

(Somewhat uncertain)

Do they still trouble you? So long, long time ago as it is?

SOLNESS.

(Looks fixedly at her, without answering)

A happy man, you said—

HILDA.

Yes, are you not happy generally?

SOLNESS.

(Continues looking at her)

When I told you of this fire—hm—

HILDA.

Well?

SOLNESS.

Did not then a particular idea take possession of you?

HILDA.

(Thoughtfully)

No. What idea should that be ?

SOLNESS.

(Impressively)

If it had not been for that fire, I should not have been enabled to build homes for people; cosy, snug, bright homes, where father, mother and children can live in glad and safe perception of the fact that it is an extremely happy thing to exist,—and more than all this, to belong one to the other—in great and small things.

HILDA.

(Interested)

But does it not give you great happiness to be able to create such beautiful homes ?

SOLNESS.

The price, Hilda ! The terrible price I had to pay for this ! You forget that.

HILDA.

But can you not get over this ?

SOLNESS.

No, in order to build homes for others, I had to renounce for all time to come any hope of ever having a home myself. I mean a home for the children, and for father and mother too.

HILDA.

(Cautiously)

But not for all time surely ?

SOLNESS.

(Nods slowly)

That was the price for the happiness people talk about. (Breathes heavily) —That happiness—hm—that happiness could not be bought any cheaper, Hilda.

HILDA.

(As before)

But may not that be righted yet?

SOLNESS.

Never—never! That is also one of the consequences of the fire and of Aline's sickness just after.

HILDA.

And still you put in all these nurseries?

SOLNESS.

(Earnestly)

Have you never noticed, Hilda, that the impossible always lures and entices us?

HILDA.

(In deep thought)

The impossible? (With life) Yes, that is true. Have you experienced that too?

SOLNESS.

Yes I have.

HILDA.

Then I guess there must be something of a troll in you too.

SOLNESS.

Why a troll?

HILDA.

Well, what would you call it?

SOLNESS.

(Rising)

No! No! It may be. (Violently) But what else than a troll can I become, as everything—everything shapes itself?

HILDA.

What do you mean?

SOLNESS.

(With emotion and in a low tone)

Note what I tell you, Hilda. All that I have succeeded in accomplishing, building, and creating in beauty, in harmony, in snug comfort, and in grand splendor, as well— (clenches his fist) —oh, is it not frightful to contemplate—

HILDA.

What is so frightful?

SOLNESS.

That for all this I must make the other scale tip. I must pay for it all. Not with money. But with human happiness. And not with my own happiness, alone. But with that of others also. You see, Hilda,—that is the price of my successful position to day—to me and to others. And every day that goes, I must see that the price is paid over and over again, for me—again, and again, and still again!

HILDA.

(Rises and looks steadily at him)

Now you must be thinking of—*her*.

SOLNESS.

Yes, mostly of her. For Aline too had her vocation in life, just as precious as mine. (His voice trembles)

But her vocation *had* to be crushed and shattered into atoms, that mine might make its way to some sort of success. Yes, you may not be aware of it, but Aline also had great talents for building—

HILDA.

She? For—for building?

SOLNESS.

Not houses, towers and steeples, and such things as I am busying myself with—

HILDA.

What then?

SOLNESS.

She had talent for building up souls of little children, Hilda! For building their souls, so they should rise in strength, and in noble and beautiful forms. So they could lift themselves up toward heaven as independent, full grown souls of men. That was Aline's vocation. And all this faculty, this creative power now lies here unused and useless for all time to come. It cannot be turned to any account whatsoever. It is like a heap of debris after a fire.

HILDA.

Yes, but even if this were so—

SOLNESS.

It is so! It is so! I know it.

HILDA.

But at all events it is not *your* fault.

SOLNESS.

(Looks steadily at her and nods his head slowly)

Well, you see, *that* is the great, the terrible

question. *That* is the doubt which gnaws at my heart, night and day.

HILDA.

How can that be ?

SOLNESS.

Well, suppose for a moment that it was my fault ? In a certain way, at least ?

HILDA.

The fire your fault ?

SOLNESS.

All of it my fault. And then perhaps entirely innocent at the same time.

HILDA.

(Looks worried at him)

Ah, Master-builder, when you talk like that, I begin to think that you may after all be a little—sick.

SOLNESS.

I am afraid I never shall entirely recover in that respect.

(Ragnar Brovik opens the little door in the corner to the left.)

(Hilda waiks to the front.)

RAGNAR.

(Upon seeing Hilda)

I beg your pardon, Mr Solness.

(Is about to withdraw.)

SOLNESS.

No, remain. The sooner it will be over.

RAGNAR.

Yes, if it only was over.

SOLNESS.

Your father is not better to day, I hear.

RAGNAR.

Father will soon pass away now. And I therefore entreat you to kindly give me a few words of encouragement on one of the plans. Something that father can read, before he—

SOLNESS.

(Angrily)

Do not speak to me of your plans.

RAGNAR.

Have you examined them?

SOLNESS.

Yes—I have.

RAGNAR.

And they don't amount to anything? And I don't amount to anything either, I suppose.

SOLNESS.

(Seriously)

You would better keep on working for me, Ragnar. You shall have your own way in everything. You can marry. Live without any cares. Perhaps even be happy. But get the foolish notion out of your head of starting in business for yourself.

RAGNAR.

Very well, I will go home and tell father what you say. For I promised him to do that. Must I tell him this, before he dies?

SOLNESS.

(Moaning)

Tell him—tell him what you please, for all I care. It would probably be better, not to tell him anything.

RAGNAR.

May I take the plans with me?

SOLNESS.

Certainly. Take them away. They are lying on the table over there.

RAGNAR.

(Walks over to the table)

Thanks.

HILDA.

(Places her hand on the portfolio)

No! No! Leave them here!

SOLNESS.

Why?

HILDA.

Because I should like to look at them.

SOLNESS.

But you have. (To Ragnar) Very well, leave them here for a time then.

RAGNAR.

As you say, Sir.

SOLNESS.

And go home to your father at once.

RAGNAR.

Yes. Perhaps I would better do so.

SOLNESS.

(As if in a desperate mood)

Ragnar, you must not demand of me, what I *cannot* give. Do you hear, Ragnar, you *must* not.

RAGNAR.

No, no! Pardon me.

(He bows and retires through the door in the corner.)

(Hilda walks over near the pier-glass and sits down.)

HILDA.

(Looks angrily at Solness)

That was very unkind of you.

SOLNESS.

Do *you* think so.

HILDA.

Yes, really mean ! And hard, and cruel, too !

SOLNESS.

Oh, you do not understand my feelings.

HILDA.

Nevertheless—you shouldn't act that way.

SOLNESS.

But you said a little while ago, that I ought to be the only man, who should be allowed to build here.

HILDA.

That *I* can say, but not *you*.

SOLNESS.

Surely I most of all—I who have paid so dearly for my position.

HILDA.

Yes, with something you call comforts of home—and such like—

SOLNESS.

And with my peace of mind in the bargain.

HILDA.

(Rising)

Peace of mind? (Cordially) Yes, you are right, poor master-builder.—I forgot that *you* make yourself believe—

SOLNESS.

(With a quiet subdued laughter)

Please be seated again, Hilda. I have something very amusing to tell you.

HILDA.

(Exited, seating herself)

Well?

SOLNESS.

It sounds so ridiculously small. For the foundation of it all is a crack in a chimney, you see.

HILDA.

Is that all?

SOLNESS.

All to begin with.

(He moves a chair nearer to Hilda and sits down.)

HILDA.

(Impatiently patting her knee)

What about that crack in the chimney?

SOLNESS.

I had observed that crack a long time before the fire. Every time I was up in the garret, I looked to see, if it was still there.

HILDA.

Well, *was* it?

SOLNESS.

Yes, for no one but I knew anything about it.

HILDA.

And you did not mention it to anyone?

SOLNESS.

No, I did not.

HILDA.

And did not think of repairing the chimney either?

SOLNESS.

Oh, yes, I thought of it. But that is as far as I went. Every time I was going to take hold and do it, it was as if an unseen hand held me back. "Not to day," I said to myself, "tomorrow." But it was never done.

HILDA.

But why did you keep on postponing it?

SOLNESS.

Because I was making my calculations. (Low and subdued) Through that black little crack in the chimney I might perhaps wend my way to the highest goal of my ambition—as a builder.

HILDA.

(Gazing out in the air)

That must have been exciting.

SOLNESS.

Irresistible, almost. Entirely irresistible! At that time it all looked to me so easy and so perfectly plain. I wanted it should happen some winter day—a little before noon. I imagined I was giving Aline a sleigh ride. The servants had fired up in the stoves and made a very hot fire—

HILDA.

Yes, for it should of course be very cold that day?

SOLNESS.

Biting cold.—And they wanted to have it real nice and warm for Aline, when she returned.

HILDA.

She is quite susceptible to cold, is she not?

SOLNESS.

Yes, she is. And then on the way home we would notice the smoke.

HILDA.

Only smoke ?

SOLNESS.

First smoke. But when we reached the garden gate, the old wooden box was wrapped in wild, roaring, hissing sheets of flame.—That was the way I wanted to have it, you see.

HILDA.

It was too bad it could not have happened that way.

SOLNESS.

Yes, that is true.

HILDA.

But tell me, Mr. Solness, are you positively sure the fire came from the crack in the chimney ?

SOLNESS.

No, on the contrary. I am quite sure that the crack had nothing at all to do with the fire.

HILDA.

What ?

SOLNESS.

It is conclusively proven that the fire started in a cloth-press in an entirely different part of the house.

HILDA.

But why do you then sit here and talk a lot of nonsense about the cracked chimney ?

SOLNESS.

Allow me to finish, Hilda !

HILDA.

Yes, if you will talk sense—

SOLNESS.

I will try.

(He moves his chair nearer.)

HILDA.

Out with it, Master-builder!

SOLNESS.

(Confidently)

Hilda, don't you believe, that there are a few chosen and select people, who have been given the power to *wish* a thing, to *desire* a thing, to *will* a thing, so persistently and so inexorably, that at last what they desire *must* happen. Don't you believe that?

HILDA.

(With an indefinable expression in her eyes)

If *that* is so, we will some day see, if I am one of the chosen.

SOLNESS.

You cannot accomplish this wonderful result alone. Oh no, the helpers and serving spirits must assist, if it shall amount to anything. But they never come of their own accord. You must call on them with all the force of your soul. In your mind, you understand.

HILDA.

What helpers and serving spirits are they?

SOLNESS.

Oh, that we can discuss some other time. Let us now finish the subject of the fire.

HILDA.

Don't you believe that fire would have occurred—even if you had not wished it.

SOLNESS.

If Brovik had owned the house, it never would have occurred so opportunely. I am sure of that. For he does not know how to call on the helpers, or on the serving spirits either. (Gets up; is uneasy) So, you understand, I am really the cause of the death of both the little ones. And am I not the cause of Aline's never being what she should and could have been? And what she would have liked best to be?

HILDA.

Yes, but if it was only these helpers and serving spirits—?

SOLNESS.

Who called on them? I did. And they came and obeyed my will power. (With gradually growing excitement) That is what some people call luck. But I will tell you, what that luck means. I feel as if I had a large raw place here on my breast, and the helpers and the serving spirits chase around and strip pieces of skin from other peoples bodies to place on my wound, that it may become closed and healed. But the wound is still there, raw and open. It will never heal—never—never! Oh, if you knew how it can burn and smart sometimes.

HILDA.

(Looks attentively at him)

You *are* sick, Master-builder! Very sick, I am afraid.

SOLNESS.

Say *insane* ! For that is what you mean.

HILDA.

No, I do not believe you are short of brains.

SOLNESS.

What is the matter with me then? Out with it!

HILDA.

I wonder if you were not born with a puny conscience.

SOLNESS.

Puny conscience ! What deviltry is that?

HILDA.

I mean, that your conscience is very sickly, that it has a very delicate texture. It cannot grasp things. Cannot lift a heavy burden and carry it.

SOLNESS.

(Mumbling)

Hm !—What should the conscience be, may I ask ?

HILDA.

In your case, I should prefer that it were really robust.

SOLNESS.

So ? Robust ? Perhaps you have a robust conscience ?

HILDA.

Yes, I believe so. I have never noticed anything different.

SOLNESS.

I suppose it has not been tested very extensively.

HILDA.

(With a tremor about her mouth)

Oh, it was not so extremely easy to leave father, whom I loved so dearly.

SOLNESS.

Bah ! Only for a month or two.

HILDA.

I will never go back home.

SOLNESS.

Never ? Why did you leave him ?

HILDA.

(Half seriously, half teasingly)

Have you again forgotten that the ten years are up ?

SOLNESS.

Nonsense ! Did anything go wrong at home ? Frankly now !

HILDA.

(Very seriously)

There was something in my soul, that drove and lashed me here, and lured and coaxed me too.

SOLNESS.

Aha ! Aha ! Hilda, there is a troll in you too. Just as in me. For it is the troll in a person, you see, who calls on the powers outside of him. And then you *must* give in, whether you wish to or not.

HILDA.

I really believe you are right, Master-builder !

SOLNESS.

(Walking to and fro)

Ah ! There are many, many devils existing in the world, who are invisible to our eyes.

HILDA.

Devils too !

SOLNESS.

(Stops)

Good devils and bad devils. Light haired devils and black haired devils. If we only always knew whether it was the light or the dark ones that ruled us. (Walking) Ha, ha, ha ! Then there would be no trouble at all.

HILDA.

(Follows him with her eyes)

Or if we had a really vigorous, uncomfortably healthy conscience. So we *dared* do, what we *wish* the most.

SOLNESS.

(Stops short at the pier glass)

I believe that most people are just as puny as I am, in that regard.

HILDA.

Perhaps.

SOLNESS.

(Leaning on the pier-glass)

In the saga-books—have you read any of the old saga-books ?

HILDA.

Oh, yes, the time I did read books—

SOLNESS.

In the saga-books tales are told of vikings who sailed to foreign shores, and pillaged and seared, and killed the men—

HILDA.

And took the women captive—

SOLNESS.

—And kept them for themselves—

HILDA.

Carried them along in their ships.

SOLNESS.

And treated them shamefully—as shamefully
as the worst trolls might have done.

HILDA.

(With a staring, half veiled gaze)

I think, *that* would be exciting.

SOLNESS.

(With a short laugh)

To capture women, yes—

HILDA.

No, to *be* captured.

SOLNESS.

(Looks at her for a moment)

Ah!

HILDA.

(As if interrupting her thoughts)

But what were you driving at with the vikings,
Master-builder?

SOLNESS.

I will tell you. Those fellows had a vigorous
conscience. When they returned home, they could
eat and drink heartily. And they were jolly as
children. And the women!—Many a time they
would not part from them at all. Can you compre-
hend that, Hilda?

HILDA.

Oh ! Only too well do I comprehend those women.

SOLNESS.

Aha ! Perhaps you yourself could do the same?

HILDA.

Why not ?

SOLNESS.

Live—of your own free will—with such a malfeator—

HILDA.

If the man I had learned to love was such a malfeator—

SOLNESS.

But could you learn to love such a man ?

HILDA.

Alas ! It is not for us to say whom we may love.

SOLNESS.

(Looks attentively at her)

Oh, no ! I suppose it is the troll in us, who rules that too.

HILDA.

(Half laughing)

And all these blessed devils that *you* are so well acquainted with.—Both the light and the dark—

SOLNESS.

(Quietly but with warmth)

I will hope that the devils will choose charily for you, Hilda.

HILDA.

For me they have already chosen. Once for all !

SOLNESS.

(Gazing intently at her)

Hilda! You are like a wild bird from the forest.

HILDA.

Not at all.—I do not hide in the underbrush.

SOLNESS.

No, I should rather be inclined to say that there is more of the bird of prey in you.

HILDA.

That is more likely—perhaps—. (With violence) And why not a bird of prey? Why should not I too be hunting for prey? Take what prey I desire? If I only can fasten my claws deep enough in the quivering flesh.—If victory can only be mine—

SOLNESS.

Hilda, do you know what you are?

HILDA.

Yes, you said, I was a bird of prey.

SOLNESS.

No, no! You are like the dawn of day. When I look at you, it is as if my eyes beheld a beautiful sunrise.

HILDA.

Tell me, Master-builder, are you sure that you have never called for me? In your soul, you know?

SOLNESS.

(Slow and low)

I almost believe I must have done so.

HILDA.

What did you want of me?

SOLNESS.

I wanted you because you represent youth,
Hilda!

HILDA.

(Smiling)

Youth, which frightens you so?

SOLNESS.

(Nods slowly)

And which I really am longing so much for.

(Hilda goes over to the little table and takes Ragnar Brovik's portfolio.)

!!

HILDA.

(Tenders him the portfolio)

And now these plans—

SOLNESS.

(Sharply)

Put that stuff away. I am tired of them.

HILDA.

Yes, but you should endorse them for him.

SOLNESS.

Endorse them? Never!

HILDA.

But when the old man is dying. Can you not give him that joy, and the son too, before they part forever? And perhaps he could get an opportunity to secure the contract?

SOLNESS.

Yes, that is just it. You may rest assured he has fixed that, this impudent fellow.

HILDA.

But if that be so, can you then not lie just the least little bit—?

SOLNESS.

Lie? (Raving) Hilda, take those damned plans away.

HILDA.

(Partly withdrawing the portfolio)

Now, don't bite! You spoke about a troll.—
It seems to me you act like a troll yourself. (Looks
around the room) Where is the pen and ink?

SOLNESS.

I have no writing materials here.

HILDA.

(Goes towards the door)

But in the room where the young lady is—?

SOLNESS.

Remain here, Hilda.—I should lie, you said.
Oh, yes, for his old father's sake I might do that.
For him I have already crushed.

HILDA.

Him too?

SOLNESS.

I needed room for myself, you see. But Ragnar
must not at any price be allowed to push himself
forward and get up in the world.

HILDA.

Ah, poor fellow! There is little danger of that,
as he has no ability.

SOLNESS.

(Nearer. Looks at her. Whispers)

If Ragnar Brovik gets up in the world, he will
crush me as I crushed his father.

HILDA.

Crush you? Does he then amount to anything?

SOLNESS.

Yes, you are right, he does. He is the young

man, who stands ready to knock at my door, and do away with all my greatness.

HILDA.

(Looks reproachfully at him)

And still you will close the door in his face. Fie!—For shame,—Mr. Master-builder!

SOLNESS.

The battle I have waged has caused hearts enough to bleed.—And now I am afraid the helpers and serving spirits will not obey me any longer.

HILDA.

Then you must start out alone. There is no help for that.

SOLNESS.

A hopeless undertaking, Hilda! The turning point has come. A little sooner or later does not signify much. For retribution is inexorable.

HILDA.

(Anxiously placing her hand over her ears)

Do not talk in that strain! Will you kill me? Take away from me what is dearer to me than life?

SOLNESS.

And what may that be?

HILDA.

To see you great! To see you with the wreath in your hand up, away up, at the top of the steeple. (More quiet) Get your pencil then. I suppose you carry a pencil in your pocket.

SOLNESS.

(Produces his pocket book)

Here it is.

HILDA.

(Places the portfolio on the table in front of the sofa)

Good! Now we will be seated, we two, Mr. Master-builder.

(Solness takes a seat.)

HILDA.

(Behind him, leaning over the back of the chair)

And then we endorse the plans. Very kind and cordial must the endorsement be; for this horrible Roar—or what his name may be—

SOLNESS.

(Writes a couple of lines, turns his head and looks up at her)

Tell me one thing, Hilda!

HILDA.

Yes.

SOLNESS.

If you have waited for me ten long years—

HILDA.

What then?

SOLNESS.

Why did you not write, so I could have answered you?

HILDA.

(Quickly)

No! No! That is just what I did not want.

SOLNESS.

Why not?

HILDA.

I was afraid my hopes might be shattered *then*. But we should endorse the plans, Mr. Master-builder.

SOLNESS.

Yes, that is what we should do—yes.

HILDA.

(Bends forward and reads what he writes)

So excellent and very cordial ! Oh, how I hate this Roald—how I hate him !

SOLNESS.

(Writing)

Have you never really loved any one, Hilda ?

HILDA.

(Harshly)

What do you say ?

SOLNESS.

I asked if you never loved any one.

HILDA.

Any one else, you mean ?

SOLNESS.

(Looks up at her)

Any one else, yes ! Have you not ? In these ten years ? Never ?

HILDA.

Oh, yes, once in a while. When I was really vexed at you for not coming.

SOLNESS.

Then you cared for others too ?

HILDA.

Just a wee little bit. For a week or so at a time. You know all about those little affairs, don't you ?

SOLNESS.

Hilda,—what was your object in coming here ?

HILDA.

Don't waste the time with talk now. The poor old man might die in the mean time.

SOLNESS

Answer me, Hilda! What do you want from me?

HILDA.

I want my kingdom!

SOLNESS.

Hm!—

(He casts a glance at the door to the left and continues writing on the plans.)

(Mrs. Solness enters. She carries a few small packages.)

MRS. SOLNESS.

Here are a few little things for you, Miss Wangel. The larger packages will be delivered later.

HILDA.

Oh, how very kind of you!

MRS. SOLNESS.

Only my duty. Nothing else.

SOLNESS.

(Perusing what he has written)

Aline!

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes?

SOLNESS.

Did you see if she—the book-keeper—was in the office.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, of course *she* was there.

SOLNESS.

(Putting the plans back)

Hm!

MRS. SOLNESS.

She stood at the desk, as she always does when I go through.

SOLNESS.

(Rising)

Very well, I will give the plans to her then, and tell her that—

HILDA.

(Takes the portfolio from him)

No, let me have that pleasure. (Goes towards the door, but turns around) What is her name?

SOLNESS.

Miss Foslie.

HILDA.

Oh, that sounds so cold! What is her christian name, I mean?

SOLNESS.

Kaja—I believe.

HILDA.

(Opens the door)

Kaja! Come here! Hurry up, please! Mr. Solness would like to speak to you.

KAJA.

(Comes in. Stops at the door. Appears scared)

Here I am—?

HILDA.

(Hands her the portfolio)

Kaja, you may take charge of these plans, for the master-builder has endorsed them now.

KAJA.

Ah, finally!

SOLNESS.

Give them to the old man, as soon as you can.

KAJA.

I will go home with them at once.

SOLNESS.

Yes, do, please. Now Ragnar can commence business for himself.

KAJA.

May he come here and thank you for all—?

SOLNESS.

No, I want no thanks. Tell him that from me.

KAJA.

I will.

SOLNESS.

And tell him at the same time that I have no further use for him hereafter. And not for you either.

KAJA.

(Slow and trembling)

Not for me either—?

SOLNESS.

Now you will have other matters to think of, you see. And new cares. And that will do you good. Well, go home with the plans now, Miss Foslie. But be quick about it. Do you hear?

KAJA.

(As before)

Yes, Sir!

(Exit)

MRS. SOLNESS.

What cunning eyes she has.

SOLNESS.

She, the poor little booby!

MRS. SOLNESS.

Ah, I have eyes in my head too, Halvard! Do you really discharge them?

SOLNESS.

Yes.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Her too?

SOLNESS.

Is not that, what you would prefer?

MRS. SOLNESS.

But how can you get along without her? Oh—
I suppose you have *another* one in reserve, —eh?

HILDA.

(Jocosely.)

Well, I can assure you, Mrs. Solness, that I
would not undertake to work at the desk.

SOLNESS.

Well, don't borrow trouble, my dear. Now you
must only think of moving into the new house as
soon as you can. Tonight we hoist the wreath
(turns to Hilda)—away up on the spire of the tower!
What do you say to that, Miss Hilda?

HILDA.

(Looking at him with shining eyes.)

Oh, it will be perfectly grand to see you away
up in the air again.

SOLNESS.

Me?

MRS. SOLNESS.

My God! Miss Wangel, do not imagine any-
thing like that. My husband? As *dizzy* as he is?

HILDA.

Dizzy? Oh no, he is not dizzy.

5*

MRS. SOLNESS.

Why, of course he is.

HILDA.

But I have seen him myself at the very pinnacle of a high church steeple.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, I have heard people speak about that. But it is entirely impossible—

SOLNESS.

(Impetuously)

Impossible!—Impossible, yes! But I stood perfectly safe up there all the same.

MRS. SOLNESS.

No, how can you say that, Halvard? You can not even stand to go out on the veranda here at the second story. That is the way you always have been.

SOLNESS.

You may perhaps see something different to-night.

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Timid)

No, no, no! With God's help, I shall see nothing of the kind. I will write to the doctor at once. And he will manage to get that out of your head.

SOLNESS.

But, Aline—

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, for you are sick, Halvard. This cannot be anything else. Oh, my God, my God!

(Exit in haste to the right)

HILDA.

(Looks intently at him)

Is it true, or is it not?

SOLNESS.

That I am dizzy?

HILDA.

That *my* master-builder dares not, *can* not step as high, as he himself has built?

SOLNESS.

Is that the light you view it in?

HILDA.

Yes.

SOLNESS.

I don't believe, there is a corner in my soul that I can hide from you.

HILDA.

(Looks out the bay window)

Up there then—away up—

SOLNESS.

In the upper tower chamber you shall live, Hilda. You could live *there* like a princess.

HILDA.

(Half jocosely, half in earnest)

Yes, that was what you promised me.

SOLNESS.

Have I really done that?

HILDA.

Fie, Sir! You said I should be a princess. And that I should get a kingdom from you. And then you took hold of me and kissed—

SOLNESS.

(Cautiously)

Are you certain, that all of this is not a dream,

something you have imagined, and which has taken root in your soul?

HILDA.

(Sharply)

Perhaps you did not *do* that?

SOLNESS.

I hardly know myself.— (Lower) But I know this now, that I—

HILDA.

That you—? Say it quick!

SOLNESS.

That I *ought* to have done it.

HILDA.

Never—never—were *you* dizzy!

SOLNESS.

Well, to-night we will hoist the wreath, Princess Hilda.

HILDA.

(Bitter)

Yes, on your new home!

SOLNESS.

On the new *house*—that never will become a *home* for *me*.

(He leaves through the door to the veranda.)

HILDA.

(Looks up with a veiled glance and whispers to herself. The only words heard are:)

— — —terribly exciting— — —

ACT III.

(A large wide veranda around Solness' house, part of the house and door out to the veranda is seen to the left. Railing of the veranda to the right. Farthest back, from the narrow side of the veranda, steps lead down to the garden. Large old trees in the garden extend their branches over the veranda and towards the house.)

Farthest to the right, in between the trees, can be seen a glimpse of the lower part of the new cottage with scaffolding around the portion where the tower is. In the background is seen an old picket fence at the extreme end of the garden. Outside of the fence a street with small, rickety houses.)

(It is evening. Sunlit clouds.)

(On the veranda a garden sofa standing up against the side of the house, and in front of the sofa a long table. On the other side of the table an easy chair and some stools. All the furniture is of wickerwork.)

(MRS. SOLNESS with a large, white crepe shawl around her shoulders, rests in the easy chair and looks over to the right.)

(A few moments later HILDA WANGEL comes up the stairs from the garden. She is dressed as in the second act and has her hat on. She wears a small bouquet of common small flowers.)

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Turning her head a little)

Have you been down in the garden, Miss Wangel?

HILDA.

Yes, I have been roaming around.

MRS. SOLNESS.

And found some flowers too, I see.

HILDA.

Yes, there are more than enough of them in among the shrubbery.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Really? As late as this? I don't know much about it, for I hardly ever come there.

HILDA.

What? Don't you run down in the garden a little every day?

MRS. SOLNESS.

(With a faint smile)

I don't "run" anywhere. Not *now* any more. Those days are past and gone.

HILDA.

But do you not go down sometimes to greet all the beautiful little flowers?

MRS. SOLNESS.

It has all become so strange to me. I am almost afraid to look at it.

HILDA.

Your own garden?

MRS. SOLNESS.

It does not seem to me as if it was *mine* any longer.

HILDA.

Ah, what is that you say—?

MRS. SOLNESS.

No, no! It is not mine. It is not as in my father's and mother's time. They have taken away so very much of the garden, Miss Wangel. Just think, they have platted it—and built houses for strange people, whom I don't know. And they can look at me from their windows, when I take a stroll in my own garden.

HILDA.

(With a bright expression)

Mrs. Solness ?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes ?

HILDA.

May I be allowed to stay here a little while ?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, I have no objection, if you enjoy it.

(Hilda moves a stool over to the easy chair and sits down.)

HILDA.

Ah,—here I can sit and sun myself like a cat.

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Places her hand lightly on her neck)

It is kind of you, that you will stay here with *me*. I thought, you were going in to my husband.

HILDA.

What should I do there ?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Assist him, I was thinking.

HILDA.

No, many thanks ! Besides, he is not in. He is over with the workmen. But he looked so ferocious, that I did not dare to speak to him.

MRS. SOLNESS.

He is really so mild and kind.

HILDA.

He is ?

MRS. SOLNESS.

You don't know him really well yet, Miss Wangel.

HILDA.

Are you glad now, that you are going to move into the new house?

MRS. SOLNESS.

I *ought* to be glad. For Halvard wishes it so—

HILDA.

Oh, not just on that account, it seems to me.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, yes, Miss Wangel! For it is simply my duty to conform my will and wishes to his. But some times it comes so hard to force your rebellious mind to obedience.

HILDA.

Yes, *that* must come hard.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Indeed it does. Especially when one is not any better than I am—

HILDA.

When a person has gone through as much as you have—

MRS. SOLNESS.

How do you know that?

HILDA.

Your husband told me about it.

MRS. SOLNESS.

He hardly ever mentions those matters to me. Yes, Miss Wangel, indeed I have gone through too much in my time.

HILDA.

(Looks sympathetically at her and nods her head slowly)

Poor Mrs. Solness! First came the fire—

MRS. SOLNESS.

(With a sigh)

Yes, the fire ! All I had was burned.

HILDA.

And then, what was still worse, happened.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Worse ?

HILDA.

The worst of all.

MRS. SOLNESS.

What do you mean ?

HILDA.

(Low)

Did you not lose your little boys ?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, that is so. But that was a different thing entirely. That was a dispensation of Providence, and we must accept that, bow our heads in prayer, and say, Thy will be done.

HILDA.

Do you do that ?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Not always, I am sorry to say. I know so well that it is my duty. But I can not do it at all, in the way I ought to.

HILDA.

No, that is quite natural.

MRS. SOLNESS.

And often I must admit to myself, that it was a just punishment.

HILDA.

For what ?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Because I did not bear my misfortune, as I ought to have done.

HILDA.

But I do not comprehend—

MRS. SOLNESS.

No, Miss Wangel, don't say any more to me about the boys. We should only be glad on their account, for *they* are so much better off now. No, the small losses in our life are the ones that cut us to the heart. To lose all that, which other people count for next to nothing—

HILDA.

(Places her arm on her knee and looks warmly up to her)

Dear Mrs. Solness,—tell me what *that* is.

MRS. SOLNESS.

As I say,—only trifles. All the old portraits in the hall were burned. Then there were all the old silk dresses, which had belonged to the family these many, many years. And all my mother's and grandma's laces and just think, the family jewels! (Sighing) And then all the dolls!

HILDA.

The dolls?

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Stifling her sobs)

I had nine of the most beautiful dolls.

HILDA.

And they too burned?

MRS. SOLNESS.

All of them! Oh, that was so hard—so hard for me.

HILDA

Had you kept all those dolls stored away ever since you were a little girl?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Not stored away. The dolls and I kept on living together afterwards too?

HILDA.

After you had grown up?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, long after that.

HILDA.

After you were married too?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, certainly. When he didn't see it.—But they perished in the flames, poor things. No one thought of saving *them*. Oh, it seems so terrible! Now you must not laugh at me, Miss Wangel!

HILDA.

I am not laughing at all.

MRS. SOLNESS.

For in a certain sense they were living beings, you know. I had carried them under my heart. Like little unborn babes.

(DR. HERDAL, hat in hand, comes out through the door, and sees them.)

DR. HERDAL.

Aha, Mrs. Solness! I see you are sitting here trying to catch a cold.

MRS. SOLNESS.

I think it so nice and warm to-day.

DR. HERDAL.

So it is. But there is something on hand here, I understand. I just received your note.

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Rising)

Yes, there is something I must speak to you about.

DR. HERDAL.

Very well. Perhaps we would better go inside.
(To Hilda) In mountain uniform to-day too, Miss Wangel?

HILDA.

(Jolly, getting up)

Oh, yes. In full trim. But I shall not climb and break my neck to-day. You and I will be good and stay below and look on. Won't we, doctor?

DR. HERDAL.

What shall we look at?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Hush,—for heaven's sake, hush!—There he comes. Only try to get that notion out of his head! And let us be friends, Miss Wangel. Shall we not?

HILDA.

(Throws herself passionately on her neck)

Oh, if we only could.

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Disengaging herself)

So, so, my child! There he is, doctor. I must speak with you at once.

DR. HERDAL.

Is it about *him*?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Of course, it is about him. Come this way.

(She and the doctor go into the house.)

(A moment later Solness comes up the stairs from the garden. A sad expression clouds Hilda's face.)

SOLNESS.

(Casting a sly look at the door, while it is being cautiously closed from the inside.)

Hilda, have you noticed, that she leaves as soon as I come?

HILDA.

I have noticed, that you make her leave as soon as you come.

SOLNESS.

Perhaps that is the correct version. But I can not help it. (Looks attentively at her.) Do you feel chilly, Hilda? You look as if you did.

HILDA.

I just now emerged from a burial crypt.

SOLNESS.

What do you mean by that?

HILDA.

That I have caught the chills.

SOLNESS.

(Slowly.)

I believe, I understand —

HILDA.

What did you want here now?

SOLNESS.

I caught a glimpse of you from over yonder.

HILDA.

But you saw her at the same time, didn't you?

SOLNESS.

I knew she would go when I came.

HILDA.

Does it hurt you much, to see that she keeps out of your way?

SOLNESS.

In one way it seems like a relief, too.

HILDA.

That you do not have her before your eyes all the time?

SOLNESS.

Yes.

HILDA.

So that you are not obliged to witness, all the time, how hard she takes the loss of the boys?

SOLNESS.

Yes, mostly on that account.

(Hilda saunters along the veranda, with her hands on her back. Takes a position at the railing and looks out in the garden.)

SOLNESS.

(After a short pause)

Did you have a long chat with her?

HILDA.

(Stands immovable and does not answer)

SOLNESS.

A long chat, I say?

HILDA.

(Silent as before)

SOLNESS.

What did she say, Hilda?

HILDA.

(Still silent)

SOLNESS.

Poor Aline! I suppose it was about the boys?

(A nervous tremor is observable in Hilda, whereupon she nods quickly a couple of times.)

SOLNESS.

She will never get over it. (Nearer) Now you

stand there as a marble statue again. That is just the way you stood last night.

HILDA.

(Turns around and looks at him with large, sober eyes)

I want to leave.

SOLNESS.

Leave?

HILDA.

Yes.

SOLNESS.

No,—I cannot let you go.

HILDA.

What shall I do *here* now ?

SOLNESS.

Only *stay* here, Hilda !

HILDA.

(Looking at him with contempt)

Yes, I suppose so. No, it wouldn't end there.

SOLNESS.

(Inconsiderately)

So much the better !

HILDA.

(Vehemently)

I *cannot* harm one I *know*. Not deprive her of anything, that belongs to her.

SOLNESS.

Who says you shall ?

HILDA.

(Continuing)

A stranger, yes ! That is something else. One, whom I never had seen ! But one, whom I have almost come in contact with ! No, no, and a thousand times,—no !

SOLNESS.

But I have never said anything else.

HILDA.

Bah, Mr. Solness ! You know very well how it would end. And that is why I want to leave.

SOLNESS.

And what shall become of *me*, after you have gone. What have I to live for *then* ?

HILDA.

(With that uncertain expression in her eyes)

No need of worrying about you. You have your duties to her. Live for those duties.

SOLNESS.

Too late ! These forces—these—these—

HILDA.

—devils—

SOLNESS.

Yes, these devils,—and the troll in me too,—they have sucked all her life-blood. (Laughs desperately) They did it to preserve my good fortune, my happiness—oh yes !— (Heavily) And now she is dead—for my sake. And I live, chained to a corpse. (In wild fear) *I—I, who can not live a joyless life.*

(He goes around the table, seats himself in the sofa, with his elbows on the table, the head resting in his hands.)

HILDA.

(Sits and looks a while at him)

What are you going to build next ?

SOLNESS.

(Shaking his head)

I don't believe there will be much more now.

HILDA.

Not any of those cosy, happy homes for mother and father? And for the little children?

SOLNESS.

I wonder if there will be any use for them after this?

HILDA.

Poor Master-builder! And you have gone on here all these ten long years and lived your life only for that?

SOLNESS.

It is a pity, Hilda!

HILDA.

Oh, I think it a folly—such a folly—all—all—

SOLNESS.

What is a folly?

HILDA.

That a person *dares* not grasp for his own happiness, his own life, only because one stands in the way, whom he knows.

SOLNESS.

One, he has no right to pass by?

HILDA.

I wonder, when all comes to all, if he did not have right to do it, nevertheless. But be that as it may!—Oh, if one could only sleep away all this misery!

(She lays her arms flat down on the table, rests the left side of her head in her hands and closes her eyes.)

SOLNESS.

(Turns the easy chair around and seats himself at the table.)

Did you have a cosy, happy home at your fathers, Hilda?

HILDA.

(Immovable, answers as if half asleep)

Nothing but a cage !

SOLNESS.

And you do not want to go back there again ?

HILDA.

(As before)

The wild bird from the forest does not love a cage.

SOLNESS.

Rather chase in the free air ?

HILDA.

The bird of prey loves the chase.

SOLNESS.

(Lets his glance rest on her)

Oh, if one only possessed the wild defiance of the vikings in his life—

HILDA.

(In her usual voice, opens her eyes, but does not move)

Or that other—what was it ?

SOLNESS.

A robust conscience.

(Hilda rises. Her eyes have again that glad, sparkling expression.)

HILDA.

(Nods to him)

I know what you will build next.

SOLNESS.

Then you know more than I do.

HILDA.

Oh yes, master-builders are such fools !

SOLNESS.

Well, what shall I build next ?

HILDA.

(Nods again)

The castle ?

SOLNESS.

What castle ?

HILDA.

Mine, of course !

SOLNESS.

Do you want a castle now ?

HILDA.

Don't you owe me a kingdom, may I ask ?

SOLNESS.

Yes, I hear you say so.

HILDA.

Well, you owe me this kingdom. And to a kingdom belongs a castle, I should think.

SOLNESS.

(More and more animated)

Yes, that is true—usually.

HILDA.

Good ! Build it for me then ! Right away !

SOLNESS.

(Laughs)

Right this minute ?

HILDA.

Yes, Sir ! For the ten years are up, and I will not wait any longer. Now then—come along with your castle, Master-builder !

SOLNESS.

A man has a hard row to hoe, who owes you anything, Hilda.

HILDA.

That you should have considered before, Sir. Now it is too late. (Raps on the table) The castle on the table ! It is *my* castle. I want it *at once*.

SOLNESS.

(More seriously, leans nearer, his hands on the table)

What are your ideas about how this castle should be, Hilda ?

(Her eyes gradually become veiled. She, so to speak, looks within herself.)

HILDA.

(Slowly)

My castle shall be built on the highest mountain peak, where nothing surrounds it, not even the clouds. So I can see far—far away.

SOLNESS.

And a high tower, I suppose ?

HILDA.

An immensely high tower. And at the top of the tower there must be a balcony. And on that I will stand—

SOLNESS.

(With an involuntary movement of his hand to his forehead)

It is strange you can wish to stand at such dizzy heights—

HILDA.

Yes, sir ! That is just the place, where I want to stand and look down on the others. On those who build churches and homes for mother and father and the little children. And you too shall have permission to come up there and to look down on them.

SOLNESS.

(In low tone)

May the master-builder be allowed to come up to the princess ?

HILDA.

If the master-builder so wishes.

SOLNESS.

(Slower)

Then I think the master-builder comes.

HILDA.

(Nods)

The master-builder—comes !

SOLNESS.

But he can never build more, poor master-builder !

HILDA.

Oh, yes ! We two will join hands then and we will build the most beautiful, the most charming, the most delightful work, that ever existed in the whole world.

SOLNESS.

(Excited)

Hilda, tell me what that is.

HILDA.

(Looks smilingly at him, shakes her head, pouts and talks as to a child)

Builders— —they are such blockheads !

SOLNESS.

Yes, of course they are blockheads. But tell me what that is,—that, which is the most beautiful in the world, and which we shall build together.

HILDA.

(After a short silence, and with an uncertain expression in her eyes)

Castles in the air !

SOLNESS.

Castles in the air?

HILDA.

(Nods)

Castles in the air, yes! Do you know what such a castle is?

SOLNESS.

Yes, it is the most beautiful thing in the world, you say.

HILDA.

(Rises as in anger)

Yes! Castles in the air—they are so easy to hide in—and so easy to build—(looks scornfully at him)—especially for master-builders who have—a dizzy conscience.

SOLNESS.

(Rising)

From this day on, Hilda, you and I will build together.

HILDA.

(With a half doubting smile)

A *real* castle in the air?

SOLNESS.

Yes, one with a stone foundation!

(Ragnar Brovik comes from the house, carrying a large wreath of greens with flowers and silk ribbons interwoven.)

HILDA.

(Joyful)

Ah, the wreath! Oh, it will be awfully beautiful!

SOLNESS.

(Astonished)

Do *you* bring the wreath, Ragnar?

RAGNAR.

I had promised the foreman to do so.

SOLNESS.

(Easier)

Well, then I hope your father is better.

RAGNAR.

No !

SOLNESS.

Did not what I had written cheer him up ?

RAGNAR.

It came too late.

SOLNESS.

Too late ?

RAGNAR.

When she came with it, he was not conscious any more. He has had a stroke of paralysis.

SOLNESS.

You would better go home then and take care of him.

RAGNAR.

He does not need me any more now.

SOLNESS.

But you ought to stay with him.

RAGNAR.

She is there, at his bedside.

SOLNESS.

(Somewhat uncertain)

Kaja ?

RAGNAR.

(With a dark glance)

Yes,—Kaja, yes.

SOLNESS.

Go home, Ragnar, to him and to her. Let *me* have the wreath.

RAGNAR.

(Suppressing a satirical smile)

But you do not intend— —?

SOLNESS.

I intend to take it down myself. (Takes the wreath from him) We have no use for you to day.

RAGNAR.

I know you have no use for me hereafter, but I will stay to day.

SOLNESS.

Very well! Stay then, if you are determined to do so.

HILDA.

(At the railing)

Mr. Master-builder, here I will stand and look at you.

SOLNESS.

At me?

HILDA.

It will be awfully exciting!

SOLNESS.

(In a low tone)

That we will speak of later, Hilda!

(He goes down the stairs and out through the garden with the wreath.)

HILDA.

(Looks after him, then turns to Ragnar)

I should think you could at least have thanked him.

RAGNAR.

Thanked him? Should I have thanked *him*?

HILDA.

Yes, that you certainly ought to have done.

RAGNAR.

If I should thank anyone, it would be you.

HILDA.

How can you say that?

RAGNAR.

(Without answering her)

But look out, Miss—, for you do not know *him* yet:

HILDA.

(Fiery)

Oh, I know him better than any one else.

RAGNAR.

(Laughs from rage)

Thank him, who has kept me down all these years! Him, who has succeeded in making my father doubt me! Him, who has made me doubt myself! And all only to—

HILDA.

(As if surmising something)

To—? Tell me quick!

RAGNAR.

In order to keep *her* with him.

HILDA.

(A step nearer)

The lady at the desk?

RAGNAR.

Yes!

HILDA.

(Threatens with clenched fist)

It is untrue! You slander him!

RAGNAR.

I would not believe it until to day.—She told me herself.

HILDA.

(Besides herself)

What did she say? I want to know all, at once! Speak quickly!

RAGNAR.

She said, that he has robbed her of her soul. He possesses her every thought. She only lives for him. She says, she can never let him go. That she will stay here, where he is—

HILDA.

(with flashing eyes)

She shall not!

RAGNAR.

Who should forbid it then?

HILDA.

He would not want it either.

RAGNAR.

No, I understand it all now. After this she would only be in the way.

HILDA.

You understand nothing, when you can talk that way. No, I will tell you, why he retained her.

RAGNAR.

Why then?

HILDA.

In order to be able to keep *you*.

RAGNAR.

Has he told you so?

HILDA.

No, but that is the way it is. It must be so.
(Wildly) I will—I want it to be so.

RAGNAR.

And the moment *you* come, he lets her go.

HILDA.

It was *you*—*you* he let go. What do you think
he cares about such strange women.

RAGNAR.

Has he then been afraid of me?

HILDA.

He afraid! You should not be as vain as all
that.

RAGNAR.

Ah! He must long ago have understood, that
I had talents.—But after all—*afraid*—*that* is pre-
cisely what he is, you see.

HILDA.

He? That you can go and tell to the marines.

RAGNAR.

In one way he *is* afraid, he, the great master-
builder! To rob others of all the happiness of life,
as he has done with father and me, that he can do.
He is not afraid of *that*. But only to climb up on a
bit of scaffold, is more than he would dare to under-
take.

HILDA.

Bah! You should only have seen him at the
dizzy heights I once saw him.

RAGNAR.

Have you seen that?

HILDA.

Yes, of course I have. I shall not soon forget how he looked, when he fastened the wreath on the vane on the high steeple of our church.

RAGNAR.

I know he has dared do it *once* in his life. We young people have often spoken about it. But no power in the world can get him to do it over again.

HILDA.

He will do it over again to day !

RAGNAR.

(With scorn)

Don't you believe it.

HILDA.

We shall see.

RAGNAR.

Neither you nor I will ever see that.

HILDA.

(With great passion)

I *will* see it ! I *will* and *must* see it !

RAGNAR.

But he doesn't do it. He simply dares not do it. For he happens to have *that* failing, great master-builder as he is.

(Mrs Solness comes out on the veranda.)

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Looks around)

Is he not here ?—Where is he ?

RAGNAR.

Mr. Solness is over by the workmen.

HILDA.

He took the wreath over.

MRS. SOLNESS.

(In terror)

Did he take the wreath?—My God—my God!
—Mr. Brovik, you must run down. Try to get him to come up here.

RAGNAR.

Shall I tell him, that you want to see him?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes do, please.—No, no! Don't say that I want to see him. Tell him that some one has *called*, and that he must come at once.

RAGNAR.

Very well, I shall do so, Mrs. Solness.

(He leaves by way of the stairs and traverses the garden.)

MRS. SOLNESS.

Oh, Miss Wangel, you cannot realize what I suffer—what fear possesses me for his sake.

HILDA.

But is this anything to be so afraid of?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, do you not understand? Just think, if he should really do it. Suppose he should take the notion into his head to climb up on the scaffold—

HILDA.

(Nervous and excited)

Do you believe he will do it?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Ah, it is impossible to tell what notion he may not get into his head. He is liable to do almost anything.

HILDA.

You also believe, that he is—is—a kind of—

MRS. SOLNESS.

I do not know what to believe any more. The doctor has told me so many strange things, and when I consider it in connection with certain things I have heard him say, I don't—

DR. HERDAL.

(Coming out on the veranda)

Is he not coming soon?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, I hope so. I have sent word to him.

DR. HERDAL.

(Nearer)

But you would better go into the house, Mrs. Solness.

MRS. SOLNESS.

No, no! I must stay out here and wait for Halvard.

DR. HERDAL.

Yes, but there are some ladies in there, who are inquiring for you.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Too bad! Just now too!

DR. HERDAL.

—They say, that they are very anxious to witness the festivities.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Well, I suppose I must go and see them, for that is my duty, I take it.

HILDA.

Can't you ask those ladies to go home?

MRS. SOLNESS.

No, that would never do. As they are here, it is of course my duty to receive them. But will you not please stay here and receive him, when he comes?

DR. HERDAL.

And try to detain him as long as you can—

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, please do, Miss Wangel. Hold him as tight as you can.

HILDA.

Would it not look better, if you did that yourself?

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes, it was of course *my* duty, but when you have duties to perform all over at the same time—

DR. HERDAL.

(Looking out in the garden)

He is coming this way.

MRS. SOLNESS.

And to think that I must leave!

DR. HERDAL.

(To Hilda)

Do not let him know that I am here.

HILDA.

Oh, no! I shall think of something else to speak to him about.

MRS. SOLNESS.

And be sure to keep him here! I believe *you* can do that best.

(Mrs Solness and Dr. Herdal go into the house. Hilda remains on the veranda.)

(Solness comes from the garden up the stairs.)

SOLNESS.

There is somebody who desires to see me, I hear.

HILDA.

Yes, I am that somebody.

SOLNESS.

Ah, it is you, Hilda! I was afraid it might be Aline and the doctor.

HILDA.

You are rather cowardly, are you not?

SOLNESS.

You believe that, do you?

HILDA.

Yes, people say, you are afraid to crawl around—up on the scaffoldings.

SOLNESS.

Well, that is a different thing altogether.

HILDA.

Then you are afraid?

SOLNESS.

Yes, I am.

HILDA.

Afraid that you might fall down and kill yourself?

SOLNESS.

No, not of that.

HILDA.

But of what then?

SOLNESS.

I fear retribution, Hilda!

HILDA.

Retribution ? (Shakes her head) I do not understand.

SOLNESS.

Be seated. I will tell you something.

HILDA.

Yes do,—now !

(She seats herself on a stool near the railing and looks with intense expectation at him.)

SOLNESS.

(Throws his hat on the table)

You are aware of the fact that when I first started in business, I built only churches?

HILDA.

(Nodding)

I am well aware of that.

SOLNESS.

I came from a pious peasant home, you know. And that may be the reason, why I conceived the idea, that building churches was the most worthy work I could choose.

HILDA.

Yes, yes !

SOLNESS.

And I dare say that I built those poor, little churches with such an earnest and honest aim, that—that—

HILDA.

Well ?

SOLNESS.

That I thought He ought to be pleased with me.

HILDA.

He! What he?

SOLNESS.

He, for whom the churches were built of course.
He, to whose honor and praise they should serve.

HILDA.

Ah! But are you so sure, that—that He was
not—pleased with you.

SOLNESS.

(Scornfully)

He pleased with *me*? How can you talk that
way, Hilda? He, who permitted the troll to burrow
around in my soul, at will. He, who bade them
stand ready to serve me both night and day—all
these—these—

HILDA.

—devils—

SOLNESS.

Yes, both those of one kind and of another.
No, I was soon made to feel, that He was far from
pleased with me. (Mysteriously) That was the reason,
you know, that He let the old rookery burn down.

HILDA.

Was that the reason?

SOLNESS.

Do you not understand that? He wanted me to
have an opportunity to become a great master in my
field of labor,—so I should build yet grander
churches, that should sing His praises higher still.
At first, I did not understand what He was after.
But all at once it was made clear to me.

HILDA.

When was that?

SOLNESS.

It was the time I built the church steeple at Lysanger.

HILDA.

I thought so.

SOLNESS.

For you see, Hilda, in that strange place, where I was all alone by myself, I continually ruminated and communed with myself. I then plainly saw, why He had taken the little children from me. That was done, that nothing should hold me back and detain me. Nothing like love or happiness in my life! I should merely be a master-builder. Nothing else! And I should go through life doing nothing but building for Him. (Laughing) But it didn't turn out that way.

HILDA.

What did you do then?

SOLNESS.

First I searched and tested myself—

HILDA.

And then?

SOLNESS.

Then I did the *impossible*. I as well as He.

HILDA.

The impossible?

SOLNESS.

I had never before been able to climb to any height. But that day I did it.

HILDA.

(Starting)

Yes I know—you did.

SOLNESS.

And when I was standing at the spire of the steeple and hung the wreath on the weather-vane, I said to him:—"Look here, you mighty power! From this day on I will be a free builder. I in my domain as Thou in Thine. I will never build another church for Thee, only homes for men."

HILDA.

(With great sparkling eyes)

That was the music I heard in the air.

SOLNESS.

But He got the best of me, after all.

HILDA.

What do you mean by that?

SOLNESS.

(Disconsolately)

This building homes for men, Hilda,—is not worth a picayune.

HILDA.

Have you come to *that* conclusion now?

SOLNESS.

Yes, now I can see through it all. Man has no use for a home. Not in order to be happy. Nor would I have had any use for such a home, if I had possessed one. (With a subdued bitter laugh) That is the consequence of it as far back as I can see. Really nothing built! And nothing sacrificed for permission to build either! Nothing!—Nothing!—All of it!

HILDA.

And after this, you will never build anything?

SOLNESS.

(With life)

Yes, *now* I will begin for the first time.

HILDA.

With what? Tell me quickly!

SOLNESS.

Now I will build the only structures in which human happiness can exist.

HILDA.

(Looks fixedly at him)

You mean our castle in the air now.

SOLNESS.

Yes—Yes! The castle in the air.

HILDA.

I am afraid you would become dizzy before you were half through.

SOLNESS.

Not, if we can work together, Hilda.

HILDA.

(With a sign of suppressed rage)

Only we two? Should there not be more of us?

SOLNESS.

Who do you mean?

HILDA.

Oh—she—this Kaja,—the woman at the desk!
Poor girl, don't you want to take her along too?

SOLNESS.

Ah! Was it her Aline spoke to you of?

HILDA.

Is it so, or is it not?

SOLNESS.

(Impetuously)

I do not answer such a question. You must have implicit faith and confidence in me.

HILDA.

I have trusted you implicitly for ten years.

SOLNESS.

You must continue to trust me.

HILDA.

Then you must let me see you standing free and independent away up in the air.

SOLNESS.

(Heavily)

No, Hilda, that is not an every day occurrence with me.

HILDA.

(Passionately)

I will have it so! (Supplicatingly) Only once more, Master-builder! Do the *impossible* over again.

SOLNESS.

(With an intense look at her)

If I attempt it again, Hilda, I will stand up there and speak to him as I did the last time.

HILDA.

(With increasing excitement)

What will you say to him?

SOLNESS.

I will say: "Hear me, Lord Almighty! Judge me, as Thou thinkest best. But hereafter I will only build what is the most beautiful, the most charming, the most delightful that exists in the world—"

HILDA.

(In ecstasy)

Yes—yes—yes—!

SOLNESS.

—“Build it together with a princess, whom I love”—

HILDA.

Yes, tell him that!—Tell him that!

SOLNESS.

—And then I will say to him: “I will now go down and put my arms about her and kiss her.”

HILDA.

—Many times!—Tell him that!

SOLNESS.

—“Many, many times,” will I say.

HILDA.

And then?

SOLNESS.

Then I will swing my hat—and come down to earth—and do just what I told Him I would do.

HILDA.

(With extended arms)

Now I see you again, as when I heard the harps in the air.

SOLNESS.

(Looks at her with stooping head)

How have you become what you are, Hilda?

HILDA.

How have you made me what I am?

SOLNESS.

(Curtly and firmly)

The princess shall *have* her castle!

HILDA.

(Exultantly claps her hands)

Oh, Master-builder!—My beautiful, beautiful castle. Our castle in the air!

SOLNESS.

With a solid stone foundation!

(A crowd of people, hardly discernible between the trees, has congregated in the street. Music from a brass band is heard at a distance behind the new house.)

(Mrs. Solness with a fur collar around her neck, Dr. Herdal carrying her white shawl on his arm, and some ladies come from the house out on the veranda. About contemporaneously Ragnar Brovik ascends the steps from the garden.)

MRS. SOLNESS.

(To Ragnar)

Are they going to have music too?

RAGNAR.

Yes. That is the band of the builders union.
(To Solness) I was to tell you from the foreman, that he is now ready to go up with the wreath.

SOLNESS.

(Takes his hat)

Very well! I am going down there myself

MRS. SOLNESS.

(With anxiety)

What are you going to do there, Halvard?

SOLNESS.

(Curtly)

I must be below with the workmen.

MRS. SOLNESS.

Yes below, only below!

SOLNESS.

That is my general custom. Is it not—on week days?

(He descends the stairs and disappears in the garden.)

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Leaning over the railing, calls out to him)

But do not forget to ask the man to be careful when he climbs up. Promise me that, Halvard.

DR. HERDAL.

(To Mrs. Solness)

Do you see? I was right. He has no idea of carrying out those mad pranks.

MRS. SOLNESS.

How much better I feel! Twice lately have some of our men fallen down. And both were killed instantaneously. (Turning to Hilda) Thanks, Miss Wangel, for your kindness in dissuading him. I am certain, that I never could have prevailed upon him.

DR. HERDAL.

(Lively)

Yes, Miss Wangel, I believe you understand how to manage a person, when you make up your mind to do it.

(Mrs. Solness and Dr. Herdal step over to the ladies, who stand nearer the stairs, looking out over the garden. Hilda remains at the railing at front of stage. Ragnar goes nearer to her.)

RAGNAR.

(To Hilda with a suppressed laugh, almost whispering)

Do you see all the young people in the street?

HILDA.

Yes.

RAGNAR.

Those are my friends, who want to look at the master.

HILDA.

Why do they want to look at him?

RAGNAR.

They want to enjoy the sight, that he does not dare to climb up on his own house.

HILDA.

Ah! So that is what those boys want!

RAGNAR.

(Angrily and disdainfully)

He has held us down so long. Now we shall have the pleasure of seeing him humiliated. He will have to stay down on the ground himself, now.

HILDA.

You will not have that pleasure.—Not this time!

RAGNAR.

So? Where shall we have the pleasure of seeing him, if I may ask?

HILDA.

Away up near the vane!

RAGNAR.

(Laughs)

He? Not much!

HILDA.

He intends to go away up. Consequently you will see him there.

RAGNAR.

He *intends* to. Yes, I fully believe that. But he simply *can* not. He would become giddy a good, long while before he got half way up. He would have to crawl down on his hands and knees.

DR. HERDAL.

(Points out)

See! The foreman climbs up the ladders.

MRS. SOLNESS.

I suppose he has the wreath to carry too. If he be only careful now.

RAGNAR.

(Staring incredulously)

But is it not—?

HILDA.

(In a rapture of exultation)

It is the master-builder himself!

MRS. SOLNESS.

(In terror)

Yes, it is Halvard.—Great God!—Halvard!
Halvard!

DR. HERDAL.

Hush! Do not call out to him.

MRS. SOLNESS.

(Desperately)

I will. Down there! Get him down again!

DR. HERDAL.

(Holding her back)

Stand quiet all! Not a sound!

HILDA.

(Immovable, follows Solness with her eyes)

He climbs up—up! Higher—yet higher! See!
See!

RAGNAR.

(Breathlessly)

Now he must turn back. There is no help for
it.

HILDA.

He climbs up—still higher up! He is nearly
at the top!

MRS. SOLNESS.

Oh, this terror will kill me. I cannot endure to look at him.

DR. HERDAL.

Well, don't look at him then.

HILDA.

On the highest scaffold! Away up!

DR. HERDAL.

No one must move! Do you hear?

HILDA.

(With quiet, heartfelt exultation)

Finally! Finally! Once again I see him great and free from all that binds.

RAGNAR.

(Almost speechless)

But this is—

HILDA.

Thus have I seen him during all these long ten years. How self-reliant he stands there.—Awfully exciting though!—Look at him! He hangs the wreath on the spire!

RAGNAR.

It is as if something impossible had happened.

HILDA.

Yes, man! The *impossible has happened!* (with the old indefinable expression in her eyes) Do you see someone else up there at his side?

RAGNAR.

No, there is no one else.

HILDA.

Yes, he is quarreling with some one!

RAGNAR.

You are mistaken.

HILDA.

Do you not hear music in the air either ?

RAGNAR.

It must be the wind in the tree tops.

HILDA.

I hear a song. A mighty song ! (Cries out in wild joy and exultation) Look ! Look ! He swings his hat ! He greets the world below ! Salute him then !—For now, now *it is achieved!* (She snatches the white shawl from the doctor, swings it wildly and cries out) Hurrah for the master-builder !

DR. HERDAL.

Don't, don't,—for God's sake—!

(The ladies on the veranda wave their handkerchiefs and the people in the street take up the cheering. Suddenly a hush comes over all, and it in turn is followed by an exclamation of horror. A human body, together with planks and boards, is dimly seen to fall away in between the trees.)

MRS. SOLNESS AND THE LADIES.

He falls !—He falls !

(Mrs. Solness totters, falls unconscious backward in the arms of the ladies. Great confusion.)

(The people in the street break down the fence and storm into the garden. Dr. Herdal runs down the steps. A short pause)

HILDA.

(Still gazes intently upward and says as in a trance)

My master builder !

RAGNAR.

(Leaning on the railing, with a tremor)

He must have been killed instantaneously,
—smashed to pieces !

ONE OF THE LADIES.

(While Mrs. Solness is carried into the house)

Run for the doctor—

RAGNAR.

I cannot move my limbs—

ANOTHER LADY.

Call someone then.

RAGNAR.

(Tries to shout)

How is it? Is he still alive?

A VOICE.

(Down in the garden)

The master-builder is dead!

HILDA.

(Turns to Ragnar)

I cannot see him up there any more.

RAGNAR.

This is terrible. He could not do it after all.

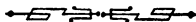
HILDA.

(As in quiet, mad triumph)

But he reached the top. And I heard the
music of harps in the air.

(Waves the shawl upward, and cries with wild intensity)

My—*my* master builder!



THE END

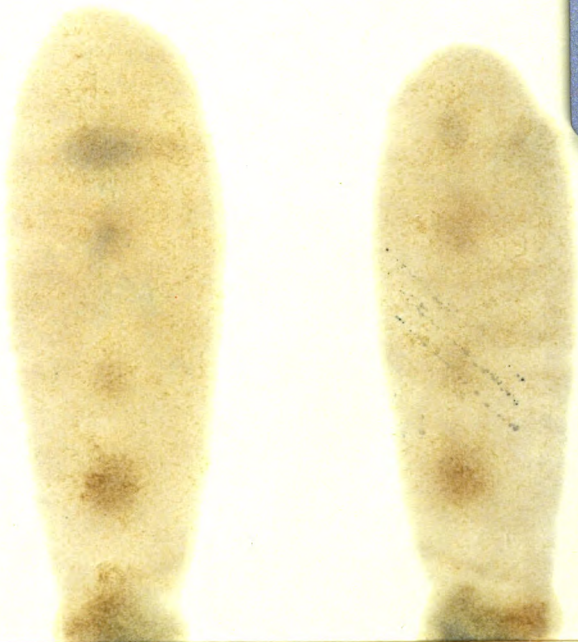


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